



374.9 064

---

## Keep Your Card in This Pocket

---

Books will be issued only on presentation of proper library cards.

Unless labeled otherwise, books may be retained for two weeks. Borrowers finding books marked, defaced or mutilated are expected to report same at library desk; otherwise the last borrower will be held responsible for all imperfections discovered.

The card holder is responsible for all books drawn on this card.

Penalty for over-due books 2c a day plus cost of notices.

Lost cards and change of residence must be reported promptly.



## Public Library

### Kansas City, Mo.

---

## Keep Your Card in This Pocket

---

BERKOWITZ ENVELOPE CO., K. C., MO.



3 1148 00661 6130

DATE DATE

JUL 24 '49 36

FEB 23 1996

MAY 21 '49 90

APR 21 1965

MAY 22 1970 PLAZA

MAY 7 1980

APR 18 1981 MONTMONT

SEP 01 1992





Fifty Years of  
Chautauqua



# FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

ITS BEGINNINGS ITS DEVELOPMENT  
ITS MESSAGE AND ITS LIFE

BY  
HUGH A. ORCHARD



THE TORCH PRESS  
CEDAR RAPIDS IOWA  
1923

*Copyright 1923 by  
Hugh A. Orchard*

374.9  
OG4

THE TORCH PRESS  
CEDAR RAPIDS  
IOWA

## P R E F A C E

I have long felt a desire to write the story of chautauqua. Finally, in 1923, the desire prevailed, and here it is.

I have loved the movement from the moment when I first made its acquaintance at old Piasa Bluffs, north of Alton, Illinois. There I delivered my first lecture in 1896, and gained impressions that have remained throughout the years.

I was at home at Old Salem Chautauqua near Petersburg, Illinois, and several times appeared upon its platform. There I first felt the constructive force of the wonderful movement, and sensed the value of its contribution to life.

I helped Fred W. Bartell organize his little circuit in Kansas and Missouri in 1906, when we virtually attempted to do fine cabinet work with broadaxes. I am entitled to be classed as a real circuit pioneer.

I helped Charles F. Horner blaze the way for his circuits, and had the pleasant experience of two years with him in 1908 and 1909, serving as lecturer and platform manager.

In the autumn of 1909, in response to an invita-

tion from Keith Vawter, I removed to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and cast my lot with him. Then, for seven splendid years I was privileged to learn, sense, feel, and revel in every department and ramification of circuit chautauqua activity. Lecturer, publicity agent, assistant manager, superintendent, and what not, I finally felt that I had absorbed chautauqua to the point of saturation and was qualified to tell the story to others less widely experienced.

The contents of this book might as well have been made up in letter form for mailing out to the friends of chautauqua. In its preparation I have had in mind the throngs who smile up at the people on the platform, rather than the stark aggregate of a hundred millions catalogued by the census takers.

I would be happier at finding my book nestling among a dozen friendly letters in a basket than ranged, soldier fashion, with a lot of others on a shelf.

In justice to the author's design, the reader should not think of this work as recorded history. While necessarily dealing with facts of historic interest, I have purposely avoided the conventional method of recording and treating them.

My aim has been to paint an outline picture of the whole chautauqua movement, capable of being

visualized at one good look. In another figure, I have sought to assemble the constituent parts of a rather loosely related modern giant, and to photograph its composite soul.

I have presumed to set down some thoughts capable of commanding the attention of thinkers. I have ventured some suggestions calculated to exercise the busy brains of real managers. I have compiled data, which I believe is new in selection and arrangement, for consumption by the curious and cursory reader.

But most of all, I have seriously sought to reveal to the admiring thousands who love the chautauqua as it appears on dress parade, its other self as lived behind the scenes, upon railroad trains, in the offices, and close to the hearts of those whose foresight and devotion have furnished the inspiration and leadership of its life.

The arrangements of chapters is calculated to establish the relationship of events, rather than to record them in their historic setting. The incidents related are meant to typify things common to chautauqua experience, and not to glorify individuals who happen to be identified with them.

While laying no claim to exhaustive historic treatment, the work is designed to afford the busy

folk of today a brief and pleasant look into the heart of chautauqua; by which look their friendly concern may be more fully accounted for, and their coöperation more intelligently justified.

I am indebted to *Story of Chautauqua*, by Hurlbut, for many interesting facts connected with the development of the Mother Institution; to the works of Bishop John H. Vincent, dealing with the spirit and power of the movement; and to a host of managers and friends who have freely furnished much interesting material.

The book carries a message to every man who has ever signed a chautauqua contract, and affords him an added reason for the hope that is within him. It is intended to freshen loved memories for the thousands who have sat together under the big tent tops in the rich enjoyments there afforded. And I am presumptuous enough to hope that it may help to unfurl afresh the banner of community progress, and urge to bigger and better accomplishments.

HUGH A. ORCHARD



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	I.	PIONEERING IN PROGRESS	11
CHAPTER	II.	THE BEGINNING . . . .	19
CHAPTER	III.	THE FISH LEAPS . . . .	38
CHAPTER	IV.	TYPICAL CASES OF PROMOTION. . . . .	51
CHAPTER	V.	RISE AND FALL OF EPWORTH LEAGUE ASSEMBLIES . . . . .	85
CHAPTER	VI.	ORGANIZED EFFORTS FOR ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY . . . . .	91
CHAPTER	VII.	THE THIRD GENERATION	108
CHAPTER	VIII.	MORE EARLY CIRCUIT PROMOTION . . . . .	137
CHAPTER	IX.	PERIOD OF VAST EXPANSION . . . . .	161
CHAPTER	X.	SOME EARLY DAY PROBLEMS . . . . .	195
CHAPTER	XI.	HOW THE CHAUTAUQUA IS PREPARED AND DELIVERED . . . . .	223

CHAPTER XII.	DOWN THE LINE . . .	248
CHAPTER XIII.	ACTION AND REACTION .	268
CHAPTER XIV.	WHENCE AND HOW OF THE CIRCUIT WHO'S WHO . . . . .	292
	APPENDIX . . . . .	310

## CHAPTER I

### PIONEERING IN PROGRESS

All progress is the result of adventure into unknown realms, and the laborious after-task of causing the discoveries there made to render useful service.

The word adventure has a pleasing sound. It kindles a sparkle in the eye of youth, and is one of the few words capable of maintaining its thrill throughout a lifetime.

Involuntarily we surround the trail-blazer with a sort of mystery and ascribe to him a certain hardihood and heroism. We esteem his accomplishments as the ancients did the spoils of war, and vote him a secure place in our affections.

We can rightly appraise the accomplishments of those who have discovered continents, located gold or oil fields, or pushed steel trails across the desert. The first product of these adventures is physical, and the eye can see it, we can hear it, touch, and taste.

Far more baffling and interesting, however, are the adventurers into the intellectual and moral

## 12 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

realm who bravely plunge ahead amidst the invisible, and bring back something made from nothing that ever was before.

In some such way as this, actuated by the three-fold motive of adventure, service, and personal gain, the men most responsible for the development and spread of the chautauqua, now so well known throughout the United States, pushed their way into unknown fields; and after years of research and painstaking toil caused ten thousand units of culture to grow where none such had ever grown before.

The startling discoveries and developments during recent years in all lines of human thought and action have quite accustomed us to surprises; the uncommon quickly becomes common, and we soberly accept the finished product, howsoever laboriously or heroically arrived at, as a mere matter of fact.

But all progress has a background. There stand the stumps where trees have been cut down; there are holes in the ground where ore has been mined; records of a thousand transactions; the footprints of workmen busy at the task, and unmistakable signs of heart throbs and anxieties, and faith not unmixed with fears, while the elemental parts were being joined in a completed unit and the dreams of the builders became realities.

Such is all history, and such is the story of the chautauqua. Such a story cannot fail of interest to the thinking, living American, to whose very doorstep the chautauqua has been brought, and whose mind and heart have by this means been put in touch with a throng of forward-looking persons numbering millions.

Launched as a center of burning zeal for the study of the bible, with special reference to advancement in Sunday School work, the first phase of chautauqua development was purely religious. Then came a gradual and orderly incorporation of other studies, and a few carefully selected items of entertainment, culminating at length in a fully rounded and comprehensive program of sterling appeal to mind and heart; a veritable popular university of informal method and ideal concept.

It was but natural that forward-looking men in other parts of the country should early feel a desire to adopt this splendid idea, and to set themselves the task of doing the same thing on the well-established plan of the original assembly. Men with the genius of organization along these lines soon began to make their appearance. They found welcome audience in many promising fields. Thus was ushered in the second period of chautauqua develop-

## 14 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

ment, which may properly be called The Promotional Period. During this time a number of brilliant leaders, with the enthusiasm of inspiration to a noble task, by the discovery and coördination of community leaders and interests, planted chautauqua assemblies patterned after the Mother Institution, but operated on a less pretentious scale, throughout the length and breadth of the land.

For the most part, these assemblies early took on a swinging stride, and drawing patronage over wide areas in great numbers received splendid financial support, and were able to operate on a grand scale. Talent was procured with slight heed to cost, and routed to suit local convenience over long distances, without much regard for their comfort, or the cost of transportation.

In 1899 the International Chautauqua Alliance was formed by the grouping of a number of the leading chautauquas of the Middle West. One of the basic interests of this Alliance was the reduction of excessive costs in chautauqua management as then practiced. Later a smaller Chautauqua Union was formulated within the state of Illinois, having for one of its main objectives the same consideration; but it does not appear that any worth-while

results were achieved along this line by this plan of coöperation.

In course of time it so befell that certain business men with hard-headed business sense, coupled with the vision of service, began to interest themselves in the chautauqua. The result was the adoption of the circuit plan of operation for the delivery of uniform programs to a long list of towns, securing long-time talent contracts at favorable rates, reducing transportation costs to a minimum, and conserving the strength and morale of the talent by cutting their daily journeys down to two or three hours of travel. The definite accomplishments of this period, extending from 1904 to 1910, justify us in classifying it as a period of Economic Construction.

The determined persistency with which the pioneer circuit managers held to their work, seeing beneath the apparent indifference of the general public a deeper interest slowly coming to consciousness, finally compelled victory in this new enterprise, and the banner of success waved proudly from the center poles of the great tents.

Then it was that a second crop of managers began to appear. Many of them had gained considerable experience in responsible connections with pioneer

## 16 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

circuit managers, and saw, or thought they saw, the golden fields of opportunity, with no limit in sight, for the intensive application of the circuit chautauqua idea even to the small villages of only a few hundred population.

Then ensued a veritable scramble for contracts in every part of the country, and so intensive and persistent was this effort at promotion that often as many as a dozen chautauquas might be found operating in a single county. This style of promotion reached its highest success in the year 1920, and the period of its operation might properly be styled The Period of Chautauqua Epidemic.

During this period the chautauqua idea was manifestly oversold. Ambitious adventurers, breaking over the boundaries of the proven fields of worthwhile chautauqua activities, beguiled the leading spirits of the small communities into taking chances with them on a venture that experience indicates must be conducted on a scale beyond the reach of mere villages, if it is to command the respect of real leaders and draw sufficient patronage to enable it to live. The result of this intensive booking campaign was the planting of chautauquas to the point of saturation, and beyond.



The unwisdom of this widespread planting of small town chautauquas soon became apparent, and there began a rapid falling off in the number until, in this year of grace 1923, the number of these small chautauquas operating from three to five days each is reduced nearly one-half from the number of 1920.

The tendency today seems to be toward "the survival of the fittest," in respect to both field and management. Established managers of the stronger circuits are strengthening their programs and cultivating more intimate and cordial understandings with the citizens of the various communities served. There exists nowhere a serious question as to the substantial value, in its field, of the circuit chautauqua. A few more years should see the complete stabilization of the chautauqua business on a basis that will remain fixed, and upon which wise managers may confidently rely in the larger planning for the future.

But whether it is in the populous center, or out in the foothills; whether beside the sparkling waters amidst the forest trees, or fighting the blasts on the wind-swept prairies; whether the duration be seven days, five days, or three days, sympathetic coöperation will remain the chief reliance for success. And

## 18 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

bigger than programs, equipment, management, and aims is the realization that communities have at last found themselves, and have learned that by working together they can do what they will for their own betterment.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BEGINNING

The origin of the word chautauqua, now universally used to designate out-of-door assemblies conducted for popular educational ends and the proper entertainment of patrons, seems to be shrouded in a good deal of mystery and uncertainty. That it is an Indian name no one questions, but just what form it had in the Indian tongue will perhaps never be known positively.

It appears that sometime after Chautauqua Institution at Chautauqua Lake, New York, had become well established and justly famous, a good deal of speculation was indulged by numerous students, and that a number of interesting facts were discovered and a variety of conclusions arrived at as to the original form and meaning of this popular word. It is said that one, Obed Edson, a resident of Chautauqua County, New York, conducted an extensive research in connection with this matter, and discovered that in the language of the Seneca Indians the word *ga-jah* means fish, and that another word *ga-da-quah*, in the same tongue, means leaped out.

And thus Mr. Edson arrived at the conclusion, the correctness of which we leave entirely to the imagination of our readers, that somehow the condensing of these two words into one caused an evolution that finally resulted in the word chautauqua. As a bit of corroborative evidence in support of this assumption it is pointed out that George Washington wrote a letter in 1788 in which he refers to this body of water, the derivation of whose name has been the question of so much curious interest, as Lake Jadaqua.

A wag wishing to entertain a modern chautauqua audience on a hot July afternoon under a tent somewhere in the red, red West, might readily find juicy material here for plying his profession. He might urge the claims of the fish theory origin of chautauqua on the grounds that thousands of chautauquas have been hatched from the spawn of the Mother Assembly. Also that the beverage of fish is well known to be clear water only, and that if the chautauqua has stood for nothing else through all the years of its development, it has been a consistent advocate of total abstinence from alcoholic beverages of every kind and description, and has confined itself to the purest water available as its one and only drink.

The idea from which the chautauqua finally sprung was undoubtedly conceived in the fertile brain of John H. Vincent, at that time a young minister of the Methodist Episcopal church, who was talented, consecrated, and exceedingly zealous for the spread of bible information. His observations led him to believe that the whole foundation of religious instruction must be laid in youth, and pursuing this idea, he devoted himself with extraordinary energy and ability to the development of ways and means for the improvement and extension of bible study among children of Sunday School age. While yet a young man located as a Methodist minister at Camptown, New Jersey, he began to put these ideas into practical use. One of the unique plans adopted by him at this time for stimulating interest in bible study was the procuring of a large map of Palestine (which must have been water-proof in its material) which he staked out in the edge of the woods some distance from his church. On stated occasions Mr. Vincent would lead his entire flock to that shady retreat, and assembling them in a compact group before his large map, and standing with pointer in hand, would take his people on imaginary excursions over the face of the map from Jerusalem to Jerico, from Damascus to Tyre, from

Dan to Beersheba, and so on until every point of interest had been visited. Stops were made at each point to permit some member of his congregation to recite the story connected with the place, and these stories were extended out of the more ample information of the enthusiastic young preacher. By this means young Dr. Vincent succeeded in definitely implanting in the minds of his congregation the main features of the whole bible story of the Holy Land.

It is thought exceedingly probable that these out-of-door meetings for the purpose of studying the map of Palestine, which proved to be so interesting and profitable, were in reality the early beginnings of the idea, which was afterward to develop, under the strong and able guidance of Dr. Vincent, into the chautauqua institution as it is now known.

These experiences led Dr. Vincent to the early discovery that the Sunday School, as then organized, was inadequately supplied with teachers, and that comparatively few who consented to have charge of classes were sufficiently equipped with definite knowledge of the Scriptures and bible themes properly to discharge the responsible duties of their offices. There rapidly developed within him a flaming desire to invent further and better means for fitting teachers for proper work in the Sunday

Schools. About this time he was made editor of the *Sunday School Journal*, and with the enthusiasm that burned at his heart, one may readily imagine the fervor with which he urged better teaching methods. The full measure of his ample abilities he poured into the constructive efforts necessary to make the desired results possible.

As time progressed and these ideas began to take definite form Dr. Vincent was responsible for establishing, at numerous places, Normal Classes for the training of Sunday School teachers. This plan necessarily called together interested persons from separate communities and provided for them a uniform course of study covering a period of perhaps two weeks. The success of these early undertakings, and their popularity with those who patronized them, all pointed the way very naturally to the next important step in the development of a great idea which, as yet, was not entirely clear to the man who had conceived it.

While Dr. Vincent was devoting himself studiously and painstakingly to the working out of a plan for assembling bible students at various points for Normal Class training, he fortunately made the acquaintance of a Christian business man, whose well-trained mind at once grasped the meaning of

## 24 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Dr. Vincent's plan, and who expressed his unqualified approval of and sympathy with the movement. This man was Lewis Miller, of Akron, Ohio, and so completely did the minds of these two Christian leaders meet and agree, not only on the needs of the times, but on the practicability of the plans Dr. Vincent had in mind, that they became associates at once, and in the closest coöperation and deepest fellowship remained co-laborers until Mr. Miller's death in 1899.

Up to this time the normal classes for bible students had been held indoors. The inspiration to hold them out of doors seems to have originated in the mind of Lewis Miller. The work being purely of a religious character, those scouting for suitable outdoor places in which to carry it on, had their minds naturally turned to the tents of the camp meetings so much in vogue in those days. It so happened that Lewis Miller was at that very time one of the trustees of a camp meeting that had for some years been held at Fair Point, situated on the shore of Lake Chautauqua in the northwest corner of the state of New York. By free and easy stages the minds and hearts of these two leaders naturally turned towards this place with which they already had official connection, and so it was that Fair



Point, on the shore of Lake Chautauqua, a camp meeting ground already established, gave a home under its canvas and its sheltering trees to the first great meeting ever held in the world's history on such a scale for improvement in the knowledge of the bible and of bible lands.

Fearful that the world might conceive this movement to be merely a branch of the camp meeting as then known, it was early desired to give the new movement such a distinctive name as to minimize the likelihood of such an erroneous conclusion. Furthermore, it is pretty clear that many of the camp meeting practices of that time were more or less obnoxious to Dr. Vincent himself, who, while a believer in heartfelt religion, as it was then often termed, vigorously objected to the extreme emotionalism that often developed during the progress of an old time camp meeting. And his repugnance for this sort of thing probably accounts for the fact that he never allowed himself to assume the important part in their management or work that his ample abilities would have justified had he taken more kindly to their practices.

And so the first great meeting was called the Sunday School Teachers' Assembly. Its field was clearly Sunday School work. Its aim was the devel-

opment of competent, consecrated teachers for this important branch of religious education. And a careful study of the rapid rise of this wonderful movement clearly proves that by the most sane and careful and strong measures Dr. Vincent and Lewis Miller led this movement on, avoiding the rocks upon which such adventures might be expected to be wrecked, and in the building of programs, establishing of atmosphere, and the whole general trend of the movement, kept it so well in hand as to make its successes assured.

The first assembly was held in 1874, and in addition to the regular normal class work, to which reference has already been made, other features were introduced. Leaders in various lines of thought and research were brought to the assembly who contributed to the general educational program in such a way as to widen very early its scope beyond the original plan of its founders.

The officers of the Sunday School Teachers' Assembly for the season of 1874 were:

Chairman — Lewis Miller of Akron, Ohio.

Department of Instruction — Rev. John H. Vincent of New York.

Department of Entertainment — Rev. R. W. Scott of Mayville, New York.

Department of Supplies — J. E. Wesener of Akron, Ohio.

Department of Order — Rev. R. M. Warren of Fredonia, New York.

Department of Recreation — Rev. W. W. Wythe of Meadville, Pennsylvania.

Department of Sanitation — J. C. Stubbs, Corry, Pennsylvania.

It will be seen from the various departments mentioned in connection with the organization of this first assembly that its scope had already grown beyond the Sunday School stage. The Department of Instruction under Dr. Vincent was undoubtedly devoted almost exclusively to the development of his cherished idea of thoroughly prepared Sunday School instructors. The Department of Entertainment under R. W. Scott had for its work the development of various kinds of diversion from the exertion of hard study, and was meant to include popular platform entertainments as well as outdoor sports, more particularly supervised by the Recreation Department under W. W. Wythe. The Department of Supplies presupposed not only books, pamphlets, special studies, and the like, but also the means of subsistence, whereby large numbers were able to live in the wildwood over a consider-

## 28 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

able period of time, with the best of everything for their bodily comforts. The Department of Order kept the place quiet and dignified, and the Department of Sanitation of course had an important work to do, before any thought had been given to scientific sewage disposal, at a time when sanitary arrangements for large outdoor gatherings were yet unknown.

Four years later, in 1877, by proper petition and for sufficient reason, the name of the local postoffice was changed from Fair Point to Chautauqua. Historian Hurlbut records that this change was first thought wise because of the fact that the name Fair Point was so readily confused with Fairport. At any rate the name of the postoffice was changed to the word Chautauqua, and by this happy circumstance based upon what might at first appear to be a rather trifling reason, the name that naturally attached itself to every out-of-door assembly of a similar character, that soon so rapidly developed throughout the country, was Chautauqua. Had it not been for this change of name of a local postoffice in New York in 1877, our wag, previously referred to, might urge that all these assemblies might have been known as Fair Points instead of Chautauquas.

Thus Chautauqua became not only the name of a

summer assembly growing rapidly into prominence on the shore of Lake Chautauqua, New York, but it unwittingly became the name of an institution which was to spread under the leadership of forward-looking men to all parts of the United States, and finally to break loose from its deep foundations in the native woods of favored communities, and, taking to its tents, like Israel of old, go rolling over the steel roads and delivering its message of education, inspiration, and entertainment to the very door-steps of the whole population.

The Mother Chautauqua, while organized and founded by a Methodist, at once became inter-denominational in its activities and interests. Denominational leaders begged permission to establish headquarters, and the permission was readily granted. Practically all of the outstanding religious denominations in America have erected suitable headquarters upon spacious grounds. As the years rolled on and interest in the chautauqua grew, it became necessary to acquire more land to afford space for the increasing crowds. The old dining tents of the beginning days were supplanted by spacious hotels, affording ample accommodations. The wall tents in which the early visitors lived were supplanted by permanent cottages, built by the

## 30 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

hundreds by interested citizens who brought their families and lived upon the chautauqua grounds throughout the entire assembly. Memorial Halls, Science Halls, and other similar buildings were erected, and these were continually in use for the spread of knowledge on many lines of profitable human inquiry. The old torches of early days in time were displaced by electric lights, water works were built, an up-to-date and efficient system of sanitation was installed, and every advantage of science and culture, that would in any way contribute to the comfort and happiness of chautauqua patrons, was readily adopted and installed by the energetic management.

Thus by rapid and steady stages the great chautauqua institution developed, from a summer assembly of Sunday School teachers on a camp meeting ground to a monster institution of popular education, embracing many realms of human inquiry and study, permanently built and thoroughly established in the hearts of thousands of people.

During the years 1877 and 1878 the responsible heads of this great institution, with Dr. Vincent still the central figure, sensed the apparent need of instituting a course of study that would extend over a longer period than had been devoted to the ses-

sions of Chautauqua Assemblies. Without seeking to enter into the processes by which this idea was developed later, the conclusion was finally reached that the chautauqua could perform a much needed service by formulating and introducing a system of study that could be pursued at home, and after much pains-taking work such a course was selected and adopted. It started off under the slogan of "Chautauqua all the year," and consisted of a course of reading called the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle. Important as this branch of chautauqua work was, naturally neither Dr. Vincent nor any of his high associates could possibly find the time to give its management the attention necessary to develop it on the extensive scale on which it was sought to be introduced. Fortunately, about this time Dr. Vincent formed the acquaintance of Miss Kate Kimball, then a girl of eighteen years, who had just graduated from high school. She came highly recommended as a fit person to take charge of this important branch of chautauqua work, and while Dr. Vincent seemed to have strong misgivings as to her ability at that tender age to assume so great a responsibility, he finally consented to allow her to try. It is interesting to know that her success was immediate and complete, and Kate Kimball

## 32 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

proceeded to guide, develop, and extend this wonderful branch of chautauqua activity, as Executive Secretary, continuously from that time until her death in 1917. The Chautauqua Literary and scientific Circle advanced to such proportions that, in 1891, it numbered more than 100,000 readers, and this great work of education continues as a memorial to the ability and devotion of Miss Kate Kimball, who began her wonderful career at the immature age of eighteen years.

Dr. Vincent and his associates, while jealous of maintaining the highest standards in every department of chautauqua activity, were equally alert in the matter of introducing new activities, and so ably did they lead as always to be in advance of chautauqua patrons, and thus were enabled to maintain interest in their large undertakings. Various courses of normal study were introduced in addition to the original Sunday School studies, until the chautauqua developed into a veritable popular university, affording the amplest opportunity for students, and combining so much of recreation, entertainment, and inspiration with the more serious studies of the class room as to make the appeal of the institution itself irresistible. Its growth to enormous proportions came as a matter of fact.



As the years rolled by feature after feature were added to the programs. It soon became the practice to call in distinguished personages who had made their mark in some particular line of endeavor, in politics, education, instruction, invention, exploration, and the like, and through the long years of chautauqua operation, the outstanding men and women of the United States have appeared upon her programs, together with many from abroad.

One may gather some idea of the high character of these programs when it is known that there have appeared on Chautauqua platform the most distinguished preachers, such as:

Dr. Lyman Abbott, Bishop F. S. Bristol, Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, Bishop Samuel Fallows, Dr. P. S. Henson, Dr. T. DeWitt Talmage, Dr. Chas. F. Aked, Bishop Phillips Brooks, Rev. Russell H. Conwell, Dr. F. W. Gunsaulus, Bishop F. J. McConnell, Bishop John H. Vincent, Rabbi Louis Wolsey, and many others who have signally succeeded in the American pulpit.

Among the great political leaders appearing at Chautauqua have been:

Pres. U. S. Grant, Pres. J. A. Garfield, Pres. Theo. Roosevelt, Hon. W. J. Bryan, Sen. J. P. Dolliver, Hon. Murat Halstead, Gen. John A.

## 34 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Logan, Gen. Leonard Wood, Pres. R. B. Hayes, Pres. Wm. McKinley, Pres. Wm. H. Taft, Hon. Schuyler Colfax, Gen. John B. Gordon, Gov. R. M. LaFollette, Hon. G. W. Wickersham, Mrs. George Bass.

Of a long list of college presidents and other educators appearing on these programs we mention the names of:

Pres. E. B. Andrews, Pres. Henry C. King, Pres. John Finley, Prof. Wm. James, H. H. Boyesen, Pres. C. W. Elliott, Pres. Booker T. Washington, Dean Schuyler Mathews, Prof. Geo. M. Palmer.

Of distinguished authors and educators we find the names of:

Dr. Lyman Abbott, John K. Bangs, Ralph Connor, John Fox, Edward Everett Hale, S. S. McClure, Rear Admiral Peary, Mrs. G. R. Alden, Geo. W. Cable, Prof. Henry Drummond, Rabbi Gottheil, Norman Hapgood, Thos. Nelson Page, James Whitcomb Riley, with a score of others.

In leaders of reform, among many others appear the names of:

Jane Addams, Maud Ballington Booth, Julia Ward Howe, Jacob A. Riis, Josiah Strong, John G. Woolley, Susan B. Anthony, John B. Gough, Ben

B. Lindsey, Anna H. Shaw, Frances E. Williard, Prof. Graham Taylor.

Among prominent foreigners appearing on the program, of which there have been many, let us mention these:

Earl of Aberdeen, Right Hon. James Bryce, Marcus Dods, Prince Larazovich Hreblianovich, Geo. Adam Smith, Kate Stevens, Ram Chandra Bose, Chentung Lieng Chang, Bishop of Hereford, Prof. Boni Maury, Lady Henry Somerset, Baroness Von Suttner.

It is not the purpose of this work to treat exclusively or in any detail the tremendous concerns that entered into the development of the Mother Assembly at Chautauqua, New York. That story has been fully told by competent observers, and from many angles. It is only sought here to indicate in outline the original conception, planting, and development of this institution of culture, and to take up a more intimate study of the spread of the chautauqua idea throughout the West, and more particularly to treat of the reason for and the development of the Circuit Chautauquas, which Mr. Hurlbut refers to as the "grand-daughters" of the original assembly, but whose story has not at this time, in the Year of

## 36 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Our Lord Nineteen Hundred Twenty-three, been adequately written.

The great Mother Chautauqua institution has enjoyed a steady and consistent growth. Everywhere multiplied thousands of people, spurred on by a desire to learn and to increase their means of service at this mecca of popular instruction, seek the freedom it affords from the ordinary grind of human affairs, cool their parched brows under the inviting shade of its towering trees, sail up and down long stretches of the wonderful lake, enjoy the companionship of innumerable kindred souls, and refresh their spirits in the wholesome out-of-doors, conscious of the fact that they are not whiling away their time on some burning beach, but combining the rarest pleasure with the most interesting study that will better fit them for discharging the more solemn obligations of life. No calculation involving figures or ordinary standards of value can ever adequately determine the immense value that has grown out of this adventure in progress, conceived in the mind of Dr. John H. Vincent, and carried by natural and proper stages of highly developed leadership to the marvelous success to which it has now attained. Millions of lives have been touched by it. Inspir-

ations have been born productive of wonderful fruits, and life has been made happier, holier, and more secure by the moral and spiritual influences that have radiated from this center of light, and ramified to the farthest borders of civilization.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FISH LEAPS

But chautauqua was not to remain solely by Chautauqua Lake, New York. Mr. Edson's theory, previously referred to, that the word chautauqua originally meant in the Indian tongue "the fish leaped out," was completely vindicated within a few years following the establishment of this Mother Institution.

It was but natural that with the tremendous interest aroused, the large patronage secured, and the substantial results in liberal education and advancement so readily achieved, other communities would early feel the desire to copy the idea for themselves and their people. Not only did the educational magazines and the religious papers convey ample information on chautauqua activities, but progressive-minded men and women from all parts of the country were drawn to Chautauqua Lake, in many cases for the entire assembly period. Within two years from the founding of the Mother Institution its influence had radiated in a wide circle,

and the germs of a new and superior culture were finding lodgement in the hearts and lives of many.

In 1876, just two years after planting the first assembly at Chautauqua Lake, Mr. Edson's fish ventured forth and began to spread the spawn of this new adventure in education and refinement at many favorable spots throughout the country.

Dr. Vincent received many urgent invitations to go out and organize independent chautauquas. The masterful genius he had shown entitled him to leadership in this movement, and every community desiring a chautauqua built along similar lines felt that the master business stroke of all would be to get Dr. Vincent to lay the proper foundations. But his many pressing duties prevented him from accepting these invitations except in a few instances. It was left to his co-laborers and lieutenants to extend the work which his organizing genius had so well established and whose rightful place in rapidly developing civilization was already secure.

One of the first independent assemblies to be organized was located near the town of Petoskey, situated on the shore near the north end of Lake Michigan. The site selected had been used for a number of years as a camp meeting ground by the Methodist church. At this time (1876), the camp

## 40 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

meeting and the chautauqua ideas were very closely related. In fact the habit of associating in the mind these two institutions continued for many years, and the celebrated evangelist, Sam P. Jones, pioneering among the early chautauquas of the Middle West, used to explain to the people that a chautauqua was a cross between a camp meeting and a county fair.

The chautauqua near Petoskey was finally christened the Bay View Assembly, and its promoters began to lay deep foundations and provide plans for a large success. Unlike the assembly grounds at Chautauqua Lake, New York, which were enclosed by a high board fence on three sides and the lake on the other, the Bay View Assembly grounds were open on all sides. At Chautauqua Lake there was a gate through which all patrons must pass to gain admittance to the grounds, while at Bay View admission might be had at any point. The problem of collecting admission fees early became a serious one. Many attempts were made before a solution of this question was reached. During the first season collections were taken during the sessions of the assembly. This method was not considered a success and was early abandoned. The next year many prominent buildings had been erected



and various phases of chautauqua work were conducted in lecture halls located at convenient points about the grounds, and a great number of permanent cottages had been built, and were used, through the entire assembly, by great numbers of happy cottagers, who had bidden temporary farewell to the cares and responsibilities of ordinary life, and had come to regale themselves with nature's charms, and improve their minds and hearts by the good things the chautauqua programs afforded. An effort was made to sell season tickets to all cottagers residing on the grounds, and ticket takers were placed at the entrances to the lecture halls. By this means a fairly good method was finally discovered for collecting the necessary revenue to make the chautauqua a financial success.

To William H. Perrine should go the honor of founding the Bay View Assembly. He got his inspiration and idea from Chautauqua Lake and sought to make the chautauqua available to a large population who, from the fact of their distant residence, were prohibited from enjoying the benefits of the Mother Assembly. Many business men, seeing at once the opportunity for service, came to Mr. Perrine's help. Through their influence and generosity many chautauqua buildings were provided,

## 42 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

a great organization was set up, and an endowment was established which, while not sufficient for all the assembly needs, was a wonderful help in every way. Horace Hitchcock of Detroit and John M. Hall (the man who later was responsible for organizing and extending the Bay View Reading Circle which was patterned after the C. L. S. C. of Chautauqua Lake, New York) were prominent among the business men of vision to fall in with Mr. Perrine's plans. The Bay View Assembly grew steadily, and from a modest beginning became a great cottage city and a wonderful success — a monument to its builders and a blessing to that section of the country. It took years of hard work and intelligent management, but the results amply rewarded the painstaking sacrifices of the founders.

During the same year there was organized by Reverend Wilbur F. Crafts, now head of the International Reform Bureau of Washington, D. C., a Sunday School Parliament on Wellesley Island, which is one of the Thousand Island group in the St. Lawrence River. This was another case of finding an old camp meeting ground and transplanting upon the site the Chautauqua Idea. As the name indicates, this assembly followed closely after the pattern and idea of the original chautauqua, and,

like it, gradually wove into its programs and activities many other educational and entertainment features. The Wellesley Assembly never succeeded in drawing large patronage, but remained faithful and true to the highest chautauqua traditions. It operated through a period of about ten years, and was finally abandoned.

A third chautauqua assembly to be organized in 1876 was planted at Clear Lake, Iowa, under the management of Reverend J. R. Barrie. Proceeding upon the theory that chautauqua assemblies should be located at the water's edge, Clear Lake Assembly found its home in a beautiful grove of trees on the banks of a fine body of water. Its beginnings, rise, development, success, and triumphs might be told in almost the same words as those of any other similarly organized and conducted institution. It became a mecca of religious and popular instruction, a favorite spot for out-of-door recreation and pastime, and a congenial meeting place for kindred spirits from a wide territory. Clear Lake Assembly continued for a period of ten years, and then was abandoned.

Eighteen seventy-seven saw the chautauqua idea more widely extended by the organization of two more assemblies. One of these was located near

## 44 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Sandusky, Ohio, and was called the Lakeside Encampment. The assembly was conducted by Reverend James A. Worden. This was another camp meeting site with the chautauqua idea engrafted upon the religious activities. A few years later the chautauqua idea prevailed, and the name was changed to Lakeside Assembly. Fortunately, a number of men with large financial means lived within the zone of this assembly's influence and readily came to the front with financial assistance. The necessary buildings were early erected, permanent auditorium, lecture halls, hotels, and other equipment were provided, and for years this assembly enjoyed very liberal patronage and exerted tremendous influence in the popular educational world.

In the process of years, Lakeside has become a veritable summer home community, and it has been found necessary greatly to modify the character of the assembly, but many lectures, both educational and popular, and many classes in various fields of human inquiry are continued with marked success.

The other venture of chautauqua planting occurring in 1877 was at Lake Bluff, Illinois, some thirty-five miles north from Chicago, on the shore of Lake Michigan. Dr. John H. Vincent

himself consented to organize and conduct this assembly. The popular opinion was, that being located within easy riding distance of the great city of Chicago, Lake Bluff was destined to enjoy a tremendous patronage from that source. This, however, proved to be a mistaken idea, and while Lake Bluff opened strong and presented some of the greatest programs, at no time during its twelve years of existence did it enjoy a large patronage. Excursionists from the city came in great numbers, but experience has proven that excursionists cannot make a chautauqua of this character. Nothing less than a large number of bona fide residents on the grounds can furnish the foundation necessary for this character of chautauqua promotion.

In this connection it might be remarked that after the establishment of chautauqua assemblies, both on the Independent and Circuit plans, throughout the United States and other parts of the world, it has been clearly demonstrated that the chautauqua as an institution thrives best far removed from the great cities and centers of activity. We leave it to the imagination of our readers as to why this should be true, with the passing suggestion that the strenuous character of city life, and the numberless entertainment attractions found there, do not seem to

## 46 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

create the taste, and certainly not the hunger, for the more substantial and idealistic, for which the chautauqua stands.

The year 1878 brought the organization of two more chautauquas. One of these was located at Round Lake, near Saratoga, New York. This was another camp meeting site, and the assembly is still in operation as a combination for camp meeting and Sunday School training purposes. It at one time developed the regular chautauqua idea with all the ordinary features and trimmings, but it was decided by its promoters, for various reasons, to abandon that plan and stand more strictly for the religious idea.

It was in this year also that the chautauqua invaded Kansas and began to bring together at a high point of interest the wonderful citizenship of that progressive state. The Reverend J. E. Gilbert was responsible for organizing the Kansas Chautauqua Assembly. He was at that time a Methodist Episcopal pastor, located at Topeka, the capital of the state. He first planted this assembly near the city of Lawrence, famous in history as the scene of many bloody conflicts during the border ruffian days, and there it remained for three successful seasons. It was then transferred to Topeka where it was con-

tinued for two years, and in 1883 was permanently located at Ottawa.

There was a beautiful park located just outside the city limits at Ottawa affording an ideal site for a summer assembly. The park, however, was the property of the city of Ottawa and for this reason no permanent cottages were ever permitted to be built upon it. But the first year found many tents housing the throngs of Jay-hawkers who gladly came to patronize the home institution, and in the course of time these tents ran up into the hundreds and covered most of the available space throughout the whole park.

Ottawa Chautauqua was a success from the beginning. The Kansas mind was ripe for every forward looking movement, and, from every corner of the commonwealth, the people, eager for information and the culture it afforded, crowded into its auditorium at every session. Jesse L. Hurlbut was the manager and director of this chautauqua for a continuous period of twenty years, and to this fact may be attributed, largely, the steady and consistent growth of this new institution of the West. Be it said to Mr. Hurlbut's credit, that the highest chautauqua traditions were maintained throughout the whole period of his management, and Ottawa Chau-

## 48 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

tauqua became a watchword and a synonym for cultural progress throughout the whole Southwest.

A great tabernacle was finally erected, numerous buildings were put up for class purposes, and all of these were patronized to their capacity. Boys' Clubs and Girls' Clubs were organized, and the greatest attractions the country afforded were booked for this assembly. John A. Logan, Major William McKinley, John B. Gordon, and others of like calibre appeared upon its platform. Grand Army Day was made much of, and the numerous members of this organization residing in the state of Kansas responded in splendid fashion to make that day one of the greatest of the entire assembly. The Reverend D. C. Miller was president of this organization for many years. He deserves the highest praise for his painstaking work in support of Director Hurlbut.

Ottawa still maintains a chautauqua assembly, but has abandoned the original plan and now forms one of the links in a prosperous chautauqua circuit.

The year 1879 saw three new chautauquas planted. One at Ocean Grove on the Atlantic Coast, which began as a Sunday School Congress, was afterwards changed to a Chautauqua Assembly, and has had its ups and downs trying to conduct a



Chautauqua Assembly in the atmosphere of a popular summer resort. It is still in operation, continuing some camp meeting features with the summer boarding house and camp meeting idea quite overshadowing the chautauqua activities.

During 1879 seeds wafted by the breezes germinated in far off California, and a Chautauqua Assembly sprung up at Monterey. The idea had been carried to the coast by those who had received their inspiration from the assemblies already operating in the East. Mountain Lake, Maryland, started their assembly the same year.

About this time the progressive citizens of Rome City, Indiana, conceived the idea of building a chautauqua institution to serve their own neighborhood, and proceeded to lay out grounds on an island in a beautiful lake nearby. They called it the Island Park Assembly. Bridges connected the Island with the main land, and all the meetings of the assembly were held on the beautiful spot surrounded by water, while the cottagers, who came to live through the assembly, occupied sites on the mainland, and filed back and forth across these bridges to and from the chautauqua sessions. Island Park remained for years a big chautauqua influence in that section of the state, but the managers could

never build up an adequate patronage, and, for financial reasons, it became necessary to give it up.

In 1880 an assembly was planted at Monona Lake, near Madison, Wisconsin. This assembly was founded by the Honorable Elihu Coleman of Fond du Lac. This attempt at chautauqua building gave promise of large success at the beginning. The highest standards were maintained, both in the selection of lecturers and entertainers and in the general management, and, while the effort was continued year after year until 1910, it was finally given up and the site of Madison Lake Chautauqua Assembly is now used as an amusement park.

That same year saw the Chautauqua invade New England and set up its banners at South Framingham, Massachusetts. Dr. John H. Vincent was the first superintendent of this assembly. It was patronized by all New England and resulted in the establishment of an assembly at Fryburg, Maine, and another at Plainview, Connecticut. All these enjoyed a high degree of success in their early history. The people were athirst for the educational features then so prominently employed, and accepted with a very proper degree of avidity the new opportunity for hearing and seeing the men and women of renown who appeared upon the chautauqua platforms.

## CHAPTER IV

### TYPICAL CASES OF PROMOTION

Within a dozen years following the planting of the first assembly at Chautauqua Lake, New York, the chautauqua idea had established itself widely throughout the country. Educators and preachers generally, as well as large numbers of the better class of business men, had come to see the advantages of such a movement. Men of vision and organizing ability found it a comparatively easy task to interest a substantial group of citizens, in almost any populous community, in lending their aid, in many generous ways, in planting chautauqua assemblies. Many communities, feeling a desire to have a chautauqua established in their midst, were kept from actively attempting such an organization by the absence of woods and waters, which were then considered quite as essential elements of chautauqua development as courses of study, lectures, and entertainments.

Great as had been this progress in chautauqua development, and widely as these assemblies had been set up throughout the country, no thought had

## 52 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

yet been indulged of making chautauqua benefits available to the whole population. Instances arose in some of the western cities where protests were made against the setting up of a chautauqua at a given point, because it was feared that its operation would interfere too seriously with the patronage of another chautauqua one hundred or more miles away.

The chautauqua was now influencing American life in many tremendous ways. It was the first great popular educational campaign, and began to exert a powerful influence in preventing education from becoming an aristocracy among a favored few. This virile, popular movement brought the masses to the study table, and made of American education a real democracy for the benefit of all.

It followed as naturally as day follows the dawn, that far-seeing men everywhere readily gave their voice and loaned their support for the planting of these chautauqua assemblies, with their music; their instruction, their entertainment, their inspiration, their recreation, and their life, whenever local conditions would seem to warrant. Thus the chautauqua assemblies grew and multiplied on every hand.

Any serious attempt to recite the several stories connected with the organization and development

of these numerous independent chautauquas would entail endless and useless employment of time, and result in a more or less tedious and monotonous tale. It is sufficient, we think, to speak of two or three typical cases, and for geographical reasons we choose to speak first of the Miami Valley Chautauqua, located near the city of Dayton, Ohio.

The Miami Valley is located in southern Ohio, rich as an agricultural country, with many thriving villages, towns, and cities, populated by over a million people. From Cincinnati on the Ohio River, north through the Miami Valley, are Hamilton, Middletown, Miamisburg, West Carrollton, Dayton, and Troy. These are towns along the river.

Franklin, another of the towns along the Miami, a paper mill center in an agricultural community, on the old Miami and Erie Canal, was the scene of the first chautauqua attempted in the Miami Valley. In 1896 Reverend A. C. Harper presented a few days' summer lecture course at the local fair grounds. While not the county seat, Franklin afforded a fair grounds of its own, located about a mile west of the town itself, and a like distance from the Miami River.

At that time there were practically no booking agencies. The bureaus had not developed, and

## 54 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

circuit chautauquas had not been dreamed of. To arrange the program entailed a vast amount of correspondence, and endless details had to be attended to by Rev. Mr. Harper. His first year's program was not much of a financial success, but the program was well received and the same leader undertook to arrange for another program the next summer. However, amid all the other details, there does not appear to have been any time to secure financial backing, and the expenditures greatly exceeded the receipts, effectually ending this early attempt at Franklin.

The Superintendent of the Public Schools at Franklin at this time was one F. Gillum Cromer. He had for many years spent a portion of each summer at Chautauqua, New York, finding there a pleasant summer outing for himself and family, and an opportunity to continue and expand his college course.

Mr. Cromer, armed with his knowledge of what methods had brought success at Chautauqua, New York, undertook the task of enthusing and organizing his fellow citizens to place a chautauqua program for the summer of 1898. An organization was effected, known as the Miami Valley Chautau-

qua Association, with Mr. Cromer as President and General Manager. With his more practical experience in educational matters, the business features of the venture were firmly established in advance, and the rather pretentious program launched by the Chautauqua Association was proof against any chance of failure.

With the advent of the traction line in the Miami Valley, Cincinnati, Dayton, Troy, and intermediate and adjoining cities, were rendered accessible. Mr. Cromer advertised the Franklin Chautauqua, and many came not only from the immediate neighborhood, but from all over southern Ohio.

Chautauqua to Mr. Cromer meant more than merely an afternoon or evening program from the platform. Chautauqua meant a pleasant, healthful, and profitable summer outing. Cottages were numerous at Chautauqua, New York. At the fair grounds no permanent buildings could of course be erected, so a village of campers was established, sixty tents being occupied that year.

Of all those interested directly in the chautauqua, only sixteen men could be induced to put real money into it. At first it was planned for stock of the par value of \$50.00 to be purchased by the boosters.

## 56 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Of the hundred or so apparently available, only about forty remained actively interested, and, as stated above, only sixteen paid in money.

However, the talent secured under Mr. Cromer's management was of very high grade, the advertising and the traction brought the crowds, and despite the unfavorable location of the fair grounds, a mile from the town or the traction, the assembly was a great success in every way. All those who attended became chautauqua enthusiasts, returning to their vicinities embued with greater ideals, ambitions to attend another year, and bring the entire family along. Those who had risked hard cash, found themselves able to declare a one hundred per cent dividend.

The second year, under Mr. Cromer, all the doubts as to the ability of those Franklin people to pay for talent had vanished. And many of the difficulties of the first year were missing. The crowds increased, those who spent the time in tents doubled in number. By the third year over two hundred families were in tents the entire session and enjoyed chautauqua in as nearly real chautauqua fashion as the location permitted.

However, Mr. Cromer felt that the chautauqua had no great future with the fair grounds as a loca-



tion. The grounds could only be leased, the buildings were intended for the use of a fair and the fairgrounds were not only inconvenient of access (there being no means of getting from the town or the traction line except by hacks) but had no real fitness as a site for a chautauqua.

Searching up and down the Great Miami River for a more suitable place to locate became Mr. Cromer's chief interest. Many months were spent in examining the possibilities of the various portions of the Miami Valley with a view to a permanent chautauqua home. Many places that seemed ideal proved on more careful study not to be suitable. With the problems of transportation added to those of beauty of scenery, several very slightly wooded tracts on the banks of the Miami had to be passed over. After a careful weighing of all the sites available, Mr. Cromer decided upon one on the west bank of the Miami about fourteen miles south of Dayton and a few miles north of Franklin. This location was across the river from the traction line, but almost a hundred acres of contiguous woods and meadows were available, on the largest stretch of water the Miami affords in all its valley. To gain access for those who drove (in those days to drive meant to drive a horse) good roads approached from

## 58 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

the west, but for those who would be expected to come on the traction line some means of crossing the river must be provided.

Mr. Cromer entered into negotiations for the land, and in order to secure it for the chautauqua had to advance his own funds, as the organization was too unwieldy to act promptly. However, to advance the project of a permanently located chautauqua on its own grounds and its own buildings was a work of great difficulty. Those actively behind the three years of successful summer lecture courses and camp vacations while the chautauqua had been at the Franklin fair grounds were loath to see that any other plan was feasible. To buy land, build and equip a chautauqua assembly such as Mr. Cromer planned, was beyond the wildest dreams of those to whom chautauqua had only been experienced as displayed at Franklin. Mr. Cromer, inspired by what he knew had been accomplished with the guidance of Bishop Vincent and the finances of the Methodist church, convinced that what he planned was not only possible, but would mean vastly more to the community than the fair grounds assembly had meant or ever could mean, courageously brought out his vision. Many locally viewed it as taking Franklin's glory away, and fought for the retention of the fair

grounds assembly. But those of more unselfish motives, with broader views, supported Mr. Cromer in his great work of building a permanent chautauqua institution in the Miami Valley; to bring not only to one town and a few of those surrounding, but to the population of the whole Miami Valley, the advantages and opportunities that a mighty uplifting educational chautauqua could supply.

The Miami Valley Chautauqua Association was refinanced and \$10,000.00 worth of capital stock authorized. Enough money was raised to obtain a state charter for the company, and plans were made definitely to take title to the land in question. Many troubles were met and solved by Mr. Cromer and his associates. One of the first and most discouraging came in the inability to acquire all the land at first desired. A portion of it was in the hands of an executor of an estate, who was unable to sell until the death of a certain life tenant. Other heirs had diverse ideas and interests, some owned adjacent land that was not desired, and the amount purchased at first was but forty-one acres. However, it was the part most desired, located ideally.

The river was bridged to afford access for those who came by the electric line. A large auditorium was built, with an original capacity of about 5,000.

Hotels, stores, administration offices, gate houses, fences, bath houses, boat docks, seats throughout the groves and along the river bank were constructed by the company. The chautauqua to Mr. Cromer meant a place for summer homes, whereas at the fair grounds he had only been able to have a tented village. Here, in addition to a camp cottage, lots were platted with streets, parks, and boulevards, shade trees were planted, many thousands of them, properly to shade those parts not wooded. Moreover, the lots sold, private cottages were erected. In addition to all the work involved in the selection and preparation of a suitable list of talent for the usual chautauqua course, Mr. Cromer found time personally to direct all the varied activities incident to the change of location and the construction work there. Moreover, the program was strengthened by a regular course of instruction in a number of subjects in the morning hours. Study classes, reading courses, and many cultural interests each found a place. Athletics, directed by well chosen professionals, were made a regular part of the chautauqua life. For those not so actively inclined, the boating, bathing, and fishing appealed.

The people all over the Miami Valley came, saw, wondered, enthused, and fell into some chautauqua

activity with all their hearts and souls. The first year about four thousand dollars were cleared in the new location. The growth in attendance, the many new cottages, and the widening sphere of the chautauqua spirit demanded more room, and as this increased the adjoining land so beautifully situated along the Miami was purchased as the years passed. Chautauqua now covers over a hundred acres. Over two hundred handsome summer homes are on its streets. Modern camping conveniences have made tenting more popular than ever. As many as six hundred tents were occupied during the assembly. For many years this chautauqua had the largest civilian camp in the United States. Four to five thousand people each summer remained during the entire assembly. Additional housing space was afforded by new hotels as well as by the private cottages and the tented city.

At the fair grounds the program had run ten days. The first few years at the new location a twelve day program was held. At a later period the formal program and study courses extended eighteen days. The present assembly lasts a month.

Chautauqua, Ohio, is now a post office address. Its regular summer population far exceeds that of neighboring towns, its well ordered program and

varied interests afford a healthful and profitable outing for all, from the tot in its kindergarten to the older ones who merely enjoy the outdoor life, and for all those who spend their outing in the multitude of chautauqua interests. Those who wish for a place where the joys of summer life in the open can be had under proper protection, find chautauqua a place where their families can spend the summer free from harm.

F. Gillum Cromer, the founder of the permanent chautauqua the Miami Valley now possesses, saw his vision of chautauqua influence widen, its scope expand, until early in his connection with it, he had no time left for public school work. So he resigned as Superintendent at Franklin and devoted his life to the institution he loved. For eighteen years, summer and winter, day and night, he was to be found working in the interests of chautauqua. Its early obstacles to success were overcome largely through his faith in the chautauqua ideal, his courage and perseverance in formulating and pushing to culmination the plans he felt best for the growth and enlargement of chautauqua. He saw its attendance grow from the few hundreds that attended at the fair grounds to as many as eleven thousand in a single day. From a neighborhood lecture course it

grew under his guidance to the foremost institution for the betterment of the people of the entire Miami Valley. With the ideals of the Mother Chautauqua on Lake Chautauqua, New York, firmly instilled in his mind by the many years he spent his summers there, he had the originality to attempt the first non-sectarian, self-supporting chautauqua on a permanent basis in the country. Winona and Lake Chautauqua, with the two great protestant denominations behind them, were the two leading chautauquas for many years. The Miami Valley Chautauqua took its place with them as the third great chautauqua of the United States, not because of the support of a great church, but the high standards set and maintained by Mr. Cromer at Miami Valley Chautauqua brought the best element to its support from all the people in the Miami Valley, and made it self-sustaining, and the first and greatest of the independent chautauquas. Truly a noble task to accomplish, and one which not only sheds its light throughout the field of its immediate endeavor, but encourages others in like efforts in other parts of the country. Mr. Cromer died in 1923.

Old Salem Chautauqua, located near the town of Petersburg, Illinois, deserves special mention as being typical of the high grade chautauqua success

## 64 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

of the Middle West. This assembly was organized in 1898 under the leadership of Mr. W. G. Archer, and has been in constant and successful operation for a period of twenty-four years.

An interesting fact in connection with this assembly is that it occupies the site of the early home of Abraham Lincoln. A site of such historic and patriotic interest gave the Old Salem management a ready entree into the affections of the whole population of that district.

The grounds are located in a beautiful woodland bordering on the Sangamon River, up and down which Abraham Lincoln at one time plied his famous steamboat. An old resident of Petersburg once told the writer, while a visitor to this chautauqua assembly, the celebrated Lincoln story about a rival steamboat that sought to share the rather scant transportation business of Lincoln's day. This old gentleman, with a twinkle in his eye, recited that Lincoln described his competitor's boat as having such a small boiler and such a great whistle that every time they blew the whistle it exhausted the whole steam pressure, and they had to tie up to the shore to make fresh steam before they could proceed on their voyage. The old gentleman further remarked that his idea was that Lincoln intended to



infer that there were a good many people just like that steamboat.

The promoters of the Old Salem Chautauqua were not only fortunate in their historic location, and in the fact that an abundant population surrounded, but also in the friendly attitude of the officials of the Chicago, Peoria & St. Louis Railroad. This line skirted the chautauqua grounds, and from the beginning established and maintained a stopping place for its trains there. Generous excursion rates were allowed on all grand occasions, and these brought in visitors by the thousands. A shuttle train was put on to operate between the chautauqua grounds and the town of Petersburg, running on a fifteen minute schedule, thus affording ample transportation at very low rates to and from the grounds. This attitude of the railroad officials played no small part in assuring the early success of this venture.

Early in its history cottages began to be built and living tents employed. The writer distinctly remembers, in the year 1905, that these spacious grounds were so thickly set with living tents that the guy ropes actually overlapped.

Science halls, lecture rooms, and an imposing Lincoln Memorial, church headquarters, and numer-

ous other buildings were erected in time, which, together with the vast auditorium, comprised a veritable city in the woods.

Early in its history the directors of Old Salem Chautauqua called to its management Mr. George H. Turner, who devoted himself for a number of years to the building up of this great chautauqua center, which developed into one of the most outstanding chautauqua successes of the entire country.

The assembly at Clarinda, Iowa, affords another example of successful independent chautauqua promotion and management, that is highly typical of what has been accomplished in the Middle West. Situated in the very heart of the famous corn belt, where practically all interests are agricultural, or in some very close and vital way related to agriculture, it will be seen that Clarinda Chautauqua, to succeed, was under the necessity of interesting farmers in large numbers. And that very thing has been accomplished in a very satisfactory way.

The first move in the direction of building a chautauqua here was made by Mr. W. C. McBrien, who came to Clarinda claiming to be a representative of Chautauqua Institution. He told the citizens that he was authorized to plant a chautauqua every one hundred miles about the country, and that Clarinda

was one of the points that had been indicated in a survey as favorable to such activity.

He asked that the ministers and school teachers be called together that he might talk with them. This was done, and Mr. McBrien succeeded in selling the idea to all of them except the minister of the most powerful church there. Declaring that the chautauqua could not be made to succeed without the unanimous and hearty support of the ministers, Mr. McBrien announced his intention to withdraw and give up the proposed venture.

At this point in the proceedings, Mr. William Orr, one of the leading business men and Christian leaders of the town, suggested that the wrong group had been called together, and that he be allowed to call in a number of business men to hear the proposition. This was granted, and, within an hour Mr. Orr had assembled a half dozen business friends, such as were well known to be favorably disposed toward all forward looking enterprises. The result was the determination to make the venture. A temporary organization was then effected, committees were appointed, and active work begun in program selection and like matters. This was in the year 1896.

The fair grounds were selected as the proper site,

## 68 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

and upon these a spacious auditorium tent was erected. Camp tents were rented and placed at the disposal of the visitors. A splendid program was provided and, the venture being a genuine innovation, the newspapers gave it a great deal of favorable publicity. The result was that the first year showed a profit of some \$800.00, with everybody more than pleased with the new chautauqua.

What to do with the money became the next question. There had been no plans laid beyond the first year. Some proposed that the profit be equally divided between the several boosters who had been responsible for the movement. Here Mr. Orr again interposed with the proposition that the money be held in reserve against a possible loss in some later year. This advice prevailed, and out of the discussion concerning the future grew the determination to form a corporate body. Accordingly a chautauqua association was formed with a capitalization of \$5,000.00, all of which was readily subscribed. This charter provides that no division may be made of profits until the dissolution of the corporation.

The preacher who had opposed the chautauqua the first season was elected president of the corporation and became a real booster. The whole town and surrounding community readily fell in with the

chautauqua idea, and things went booming along from the first. The duration of the assembly at first was fifteen days. Some of the musical companies came and stayed a week as did some of the lecturers. Study departments were formed and well patronized. Competent instructors were procured, good programs were provided, and everything went well from the beginning.

Then bigger notions were born. The desire for private grounds and a permanent auditorium grew strong. Accordingly a reorganization was effected and the capital stock increased to \$10,000.00. Mr. William Orr now advocated the sale of ten shares of this stock to the farmers. The suggestion met only with ridicule. At length, after he had brought the matter up at several meetings of the board of directors, he was granted permission to make the attempt. His rejoinder was that he would be responsible for the sale of five shares to farmers if five other members of the board would so sell one share each. The challenge was accepted. The result was the sale, for cash, of thirty shares of stock to real dirt farmers. This tied the town and country so closely together that fine coöperation was experienced from that time.

Grounds were acquired near the site of the fair

grounds, and a permanent tabernacle was erected at a cost of \$12,500.00. From this point on the number of campers steadily increased for several years. Before the automobile became so plentiful, there were as many as five hundred family tents pitched on the grounds throughout the assembly. In those palmy days the chautauqua showed a profit of \$2,000.00 in a single year.

At the beginning Clarinda secured most of her program by dealing directly with the talent. Few bureaus had summer talent to offer. As an indication of how time changes things, it is interesting to note that Arthur Middleton sang at Clarinda for a period of ten days for less pay than he afterward received for a single appearance. The Wesleyan Quartet, with a reader extra, furnished entertainment for ten days for \$125.00. At the termination of their service it was discovered that the fee that had been agreed upon would fall short of defraying the actual expense. So the management paid all expenses and gave the quartet \$125.00 in addition. Bishop Robert McIntyre came and delivered his great lecture for a fee of \$50.00. So did S. Parkes Cadman. Henry Clark, a Baptist minister, who afterward became prominent in lecture circles, sought his first date at Clarinda. Asked what his

requirements would be as to fee, he replied, "If you will promise not to tell anybody, I will come for \$5.00." Now that his reputation is thoroughly established, Rev. Mr. Clark will not object that the secret is at last out. But is there any wonder that the Clarinda chautauqua made money in those good old days?

One of the outstanding features of the Clarinda chautauqua is the Farm Camp for boys. The agricultural college at Ames furnishes the instructors, and a large number of farmer boys are encamped on the grounds for the full period of the assembly. Several successful young farmers have already established themselves in the community who testify that they got the foundation of their enthusiasm and success at the Chautauqua Boys Farm Camp activities. A similar camp is maintained for farm girls, under the name of The Camp of the Golden Maids.

William Orr was elected president of this association in 1898 and was retained in that position for a continuous period of twenty-two years. During that time Mr. Orr made many attempts to cultivate the spirit and practice of coöperation among independent chautauquas. But the theory is a good deal like that of perpetual motion. It is a little difficult to think of "independence" as being in any

appreciable measure capable of "coöperation." This perhaps accounts for the final failure of all efforts along this line as made by conscientious managers at various times.

In 1920 Mr. Orr made a final attempt at coöperation with managers of independent chautauquas in Iowa with a view to so reducing costs as to enable the assemblies to continue on the high levels of the earlier times. But the attempt failed of sufficient results, and Mr. Orr returned to Clarinda and asked the Commercial Club to assume the management of the chautauqua. This move was made, with the result that Clarinda entered the list of assemblies operated by the Independent Coöperative Chautauquas, of Bloomington, Illinois.

And all that has been said about the painstaking care exercised by these managers to maintain proper chautauqua standards might be repeated with truth about managers wherever the independent chautauqua has really succeeded. That there have been managements who have fallen short, goes without saying.

There is that ever present temptation to play for the crowd. It was early discovered that there are attractions possessed of few qualities fit to commend them to chautauqua managers, and capable of im-



parting no lasting good, who are splendid crowd-getters, and who make up for any lack of cultural advantage by the records of the box office.

When, after painstaking effort and the most scrupulous care, the program committee discovers that the high grade programs built have failed in popular interest, and that a big, ugly deficit has resulted, the temptation to jazz becomes truly powerful. It is at this point that many have fallen. The stronger and more substantial features were eliminated and light and trashy features substituted. The immediate result was increased attendance to be sure. But a secondary and very serious result was the loss of the patronage, prayers, and support of the substantial Christian people of the community. Wherever the management has lost its claim upon these, and failed to maintain their friendship and sympathetic coöperation, the chautauqua has invariably drifted speedily to the position of a mere entertainment stage, lacking in all the fine educational and inspirational influences that first determined its field of operation and the quality of its legitimate product.

In the earlier days a large number of local chautauquas were promoted by zealous men who got their inspiration from having heard some of the

major attractions appearing on the platforms at that time.

One man whose name stands out prominently in connection with this class of chautauqua promotion is that of John R. Howey of Kirksville, Missouri. Mr. Howey was an evangelist, music director and organizer and conductor of Music Festivals, and while living in Kirksville, Missouri, went, in the year 1904, to attend the sessions of chautauqua at Centerville, Iowa.

Here Mr. Howey heard such men as W. J. Bryan, Robt. M. LaFollette, Albert B. Cummins, and listened to music by the 51st Iowa Band, as well as several high grade singing organizations. He relates that he remained at Centerville chautauqua two days and was so filled with the chautauqua spirit that he went back to Kirksville fully determined to put on a chautauqua there.

He called a meeting of the Ministerial Alliance, from which he secured a resolution to furnish him support in his venture at Kirksville. Mr. Howey at once got into communication with various high grade platform attractions, and finally lined up a tentative program which he could offer to the citizens of his home town. This program included G. A. Gearhart, Sam P. Jones, Dunbar Bell Ringers,

the Whitney Brothers, Chicago Opera Company, Senator LaFollette, Governor Glenn, Bob Taylor, and others of similar character, for a nine-day program. The cost was to be \$2,800.00.

Mr. Howey raised a guarantee fund of \$3,000.00 among the local business men of Kirksville. He laid aside all his personal interests and threw himself unreservedly into the work of establishing sure foundations and creating public sentiment for the new venture. He relates that for the most part, during that summer, he worked eighteen hours a day.

This assembly was a great success from the artistic standpoint, but the cost for the nine days was \$5,000.00. After all the bills were paid just \$25.00 remained in the treasury. This was voted to Mr. Howey as compensation for his efforts. He relates he did not use it, but laid it aside as a nest egg for the following year.

The experiment was repeated in 1905, and paid financially. This encouraged Mr. Howey to take up the same work in other communities in the belief that it would afford him a profitable, as well as a pleasant, field of operation.

The same year he went to Plattsburg, Missouri, and planted a chautauqua there. It ran \$800.00 into debt the first year, with costs about equal to

those at Kirksville. At Kirksville he had laid substantial foundations by procuring the advance coöperation of the citizens with a positive and clear financial guarantee, and the chautauqua paid its way. At Plattsburg he ventured upon the assumption that enthusiasm alone would carry him through. The discrepancy in receipts is the only comment necessary. But the failure at Plattsburg does not seem to have suggested strongly to his mind at the time, what particular thing was lacking there. He must have charged it to local conditions.

For Mr. Howey relates that he got so much enthusiasm from the operation of these chautauquas that the third year he went to Quincy, Illinois, and Hannibal, Missouri, and planted chautauquas there. By this time he became convinced that he had found his stride in connection with a most wonderful business. Later he promoted assemblies at Kahoka, Canton, Macon, Moberly, Chillicothe, Unionville, LaBelle, Carrollton, and Monroe City, Missouri.

These chautauquas were promoted, for the most part, on the no guarantee principle. The local citizens were trusted for coöperation, without being in any way bound to render it. The results were almost uniformly disappointing. The ventures did not pay their way. Deficits appeared everywhere

with no money to meet them, and most of these assemblies were very short lived.

The promotions by Mr. Howey clearly demonstrated two things: first, that the towns throughout the country would welcome the chautauqua; second, that without some businesslike guarantee of coöperation by the local citizens they would surely fail of financial support and go down.

Moberly still conducts its chautauqua, although it has not been in continuous operation from the time of Mr. Howey's connection with it. Some of his other towns, such as Macon, LaBelle, Carrollton, Chillicothe, Canton, and Kirksville, have joined the Redpath Vawter Chautauqua circuit, and others of the towns in the original Howey list have discontinued chautauqua activities altogether.

Another ambitious worker in the field of chautauqua promotion in the early days was Mr. J. S. Tussey, who got his first inspiration looking toward chautauqua promotion by attending assembly programs.

He began his work by organizing the chautauqua at Columbus Junction, Iowa, in 1902, and this assembly has enjoyed a long period of uninterrupted success. He also organized Monmouth, Illinois, in 1904, and Ames, Iowa, the same year. Then Fair-

## 78 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

field and Charles City, Iowa, in 1905, Vinton, Mediapolis, Oskaloosa, and Albia, Iowa, in 1906, and in the same year Greenfield and Peebles, Ohio. He promoted a chautauqua at Nebraska City, Nebraska, in 1907. Mr. Tussey was also instrumental in organizing a circuit of "temperance chautauquas" in the state of Nebraska in the summer of 1908.

These temperance chautauquas were booked in small towns scattered through the state of Nebraska. The state committee of the Prohibition Party, and the state organization of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, gave their support and were supposed to be the real backing of the project. Mr. Tussey was made circuit manager after the job of promotion was completed, and had practically full control of all matters pertaining to the circuit.

The talent that was secured for this venture was, as may be imagined, made up principally of temperance agitators. The promoters had in mind the conversion of the whole state of Nebraska to the prohibition idea.

The program opened in the first town about the first of June. Almost simultaneously with this opening came a downpour of rain, and after this had subsided, another, and then another, and flood conditions began to prevail throughout the whole

eastern half of the state of Nebraska. This unprecedented "rainy spell" continued, with scarcely an hour's interval between downpours, for a period of about three weeks, and the attendance was cut down to a very small number at every town visited up to that time.

The "whisky crowd" was jubilant, and to this day some of them maintain that this wet spell was nature's protest against the temperance chautauqua effort to make the state "bone dry."

About the third week of this circuit operation Mr. Tussey was called away by the serious illness of his daughter, and while he was gone Mr. Wolfenbarger of the Prohibition State Committee, and Mrs. Heald of the W. C. T. U., decided to close down. And the unfortunate venture, for the purpose of converting Nebraska to the prohibition idea through the medium of a chautauqua circuit, came to a sudden and final end.

Mr. Tussey, who had formerly been a minister, looked upon these series of reverses and the death of his daughter as a kind of warning. He had been on the point of leaving the ministry for chautauqua work. But from this time on he flatly refused to have anything further to do with any kind of chautauqua promotion.

## 80 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

James H. Shaw, of Bloomington, Illinois, is one of the outstanding characters among that class of chautauqua promoters who have rigidly adhered to the pre-circuit type of local organization. Beginning in a modest way, and finding the chautauqua atmosphere and ideals compatible to his tastes, he gradually widened the field of his operations, and influence until, in 1923, he will superintend and manage some forty assemblies in Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Illinois.

Mr. Shaw began as a lecturer. His first ambition was to do successful platform work, and the opportunity to try his hand came at Pontiac Chautauqua in 1897. Elias Day was one of the attractions on the program, booked for a several days stay. An opportunity came for working Shaw into the program, and Day heard him. He told Shaw that he had the capabilities necessary for successful platform work, and strongly advised him to take it up as a profession. Predisposed to attempt that very thing, Shaw gave a willing and ready ear to Day's exhortation and resolved to make the most of his opportunities along that line.

But he was not a plunger. He was booked for Pontiac the following year, and also the next. In the meanwhile he had made a trip to England for a



closer study of English poets, in further preparation for his chosen profession. In 1900 he went to Decatur and talked to the business men of that town about the glories of the chautauqua, and succeeded in inducing 101 men to sign a guarantee that became the basis and beginning of a successful assembly under the general management of Mr. Shaw. In 1901 he repeated this operation at both Bloomington and Clinton, the latter locating some distance from the town at Weldon Springs. In 1902 he promoted Princeton and Ottawa, Illinois, and Racine, Wisconsin.

During this period of promotion and management Mr. Shaw was an exceedingly busy man. He personally looked after everything, procuring the necessary tenting equipment, superintending the platform, and delivering lectures. His contract with the local organizations provided for one-half of the net profits, and these often turned out to be very small. But Mr. Shaw had a vision of service, and seems never to have faltered in his determination to succeed with his cherished idea.

When that movement began to get under full swing which resulted in the establishing of the great young peoples societies in the churches, Mr. Shaw conceived the idea of utilizing the enthusiasm thus

aroused in furthering the service of the chautauqua. The chautauqua at Bloomington was made the State Epworth League Assembly. Another was organized at Galesburg under the auspices of the Baptist Young Peoples' Union. The Christian Endeavor Assembly was set up at Decatur, and an era of unprecedented enthusiasm for chautauqua set in. At this time James L. Loar, later to become a manager in his own name, became associated with Mr. Shaw. Mr. Loar had been State President of the Epworth League, and found this coöperative plan a splendid means of furthering the interests of the League as well as a means of service quite to his individual liking.

Shaw and Loar continued together for some time and together did a considerable amount of additional promotion. They set up assemblies at Greensburg, Tipton, and Noblesville, Indiana, and at Kenton, Ohio. They teamed in program building, platform management, and general oversight, and for a number of years were closely associated, building only on the so-called independent plan, and procuring talent in the main from the bureaus and personal representatives.

Mr. Shaw did, however, a considerable amount of booking with talent under his own management.

He was the first to bring Rev. William A. Sunday to the chautauqua platform. He secured him the first year on his own terms. Mr. Sunday told Mr. Shaw that he hoped he would be liberal with him as he made his living by speaking. Mr. Shaw asked him how \$75.00 per week would look to him, and was informed that that amount would be entirely satisfactory. Mr. Sunday did not take kindly to chautauqua work, and although Mr. Shaw continued to book him for two or three years, he soon yielded to the demands for his time as a revivalist, and to his own inclination to devote himself solely to preaching the word.

James L. Loar chose to launch out for himself in 1919, and Mr. Shaw assumed entire control of the fine group of chautauquas he had planted. He now carries a list of high grade talent under his own management, supplementing with others selected from the booking bureaus, and continues along the identical lines of his first venture at Pontiac, as general manager of some forty assemblies in 1923, conducted under the name of The Coöperative Chautauquas.

The three cases cited above, and especially of John R. Howey and J. S. Tussey, are typical of what has been done, on perhaps a little less pre-

## 84 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

tentious scale, by numerous other men having a gift along the line of this kind of promotion. In only rare cases has the chautauqua sprung up voluntarily among the citizens of the community. In nearly all instances somebody, on fire with chautauqua enthusiasm, and in some way interested in the development of a business, has been responsible for the initial steps and the laying of foundations of the independent chautauquas throughout the country.

## CHAPTER V

### RISE AND FALL OF EPWORTH LEAGUE ASSEMBLIES

About the year 1890 there sprung up in the newly organized Epworth League of the Methodist Episcopal church a strong movement for establishing a number of chautauquas to be known as Epworth League assemblies, and to further the interests of the young people's organization of the Methodist Episcopal church. Rev. Thomas Nicholson, then a prominent Methodist preacher, and afterwards elected Bishop, was one of the prime movers in this new enterprise. He was also ably assisted by Bishop McCabe, Rev. Charles J. English, John H. Vincent, and others.

John H. Vincent had projected the Oxford League from the Mother Chautauqua in New York, and this had grown to be a strong and popular movement among the Methodist young people. Along about 1884, at Desplaines, Illinois, there was organized another young people's movement known as the Methodist Young People's Alliance. This also spread rapidly in the western territory and was very popular wherever introduced.

Leaders in the Methodist church began seriously to question, however, the wisdom of maintaining two young people's organizations of a similar character. In 1887 a convention was called to meet at Lansing, Michigan, where an effort was to be made to unify these two movements. In 1889 a further and more successful attempt was made at the Alliance Convention held at Cleveland. The result was the organization of the Epworth League, as it is now known.

Then followed some Epworth League conventions of enormous proportions. Some of these were international, others national, still others local, and within a few years the statesmen of the church began to question seriously whether it would be possible to continue such expensive methods of getting the young people together for instruction and the development of enthusiasm. As an effort to solidify, and in a sense rationalize, the young people's movement, the work of establishing Epworth League assemblies was begun.

One of the first moves along the newly adopted lines was suggested by Bishop McCabe. A number of speakers on topics connected with Epworth League activities went to the Pacific Coast and held great meetings of two or three days' duration at Los

Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Portland, and other western cities. After the theory had thus been given a kind of try-out, and the way seemed clear, Rev. Charles J. English, Rev. Frank E. Day, and Rev. J. W. Mahood perfected plans for the organization of an Epworth League Assembly at Colfax, Iowa, in 1889, which developed into a wonderful success. Rev. Charles J. English was for some years highly connected with its successful management.

Dr. Nicholson was responsible for establishing the Epworth League Assembly at Ludington, Michigan, and was its first manager. The next year he removed to Iowa to become President of Cornell College at Mt. Vernon, and was succeeded in the management of the Ludington assembly by Elvin Swarthout, who for eighteen years remained in active charge, conserving its strong features and popularizing its programs in true chautauqua fashion.

Numerous other Epworth League assemblies were established throughout the United States and were, during the period of their operation, supported by the whole power of the Methodist Episcopal church, and with few exceptions they continued for a number of years with unqualified success.

The fact that they no longer exist as Epworth

League assemblies is not to be taken as an evidence of failure. They have been superseded by the Epworth League Institutes which have been organized upon such principles and are being conducted in such a way as more nearly to meet the needs of a young people's religious organization.

As in most great formative movements, these Epworth League assemblies were a culmination of a great enthusiasm that arose with the newly formed Epworth League of the Methodist church. It would, perhaps, have been impossible, at the beginning, to have introduced successfully the intensive study of institute work, as it is now carried on, without giving it a proper mixture of popular entertainment features. Gradually, as this enthusiasm waned, the assemblies served to solidify the character of the movement as now set forth in the more intensive training schools of the Epworth League Institutes, which are distributed more generally throughout the country.

The equipment of these Epworth League assemblies was elaborate and expensive, and called for large patronage. At Colfax, Iowa, the assembly management purchased a fine wooded park of twenty-five acres, within which was constructed a spacious auditorium seating two thousand people. The



program was expensive, being a combination of institute and chautauqua work. It was necessary that this assembly should draw patronage from a large territory. Local chautauquas were few and far between, and the Colfax Assembly, being an official organization of the Epworth League for the state of Iowa, had a constituency scattered all over the state. There were at times as many as one thousand persons tenting upon the grounds.

But soon local chautauquas began to spring up in numerous communities and to become competitors. Immediately there was a falling off in attendance on the part of many of the Epworth League Assembly's former supporters. They had chautauqua nearer home and patronized that.

When the circuit plan of operating chautauquas was introduced, still greater embarrassments arose to the Epworth League assemblies. These furnished attractive and impelling programs. They also committed the better part of the communities they served to a guarantee in support of the chautauqua. This not only forestalled the attendance of these guarantors elsewhere, but also influenced them to induce their neighbors to remain at home.

These impediments, together with the change of policy of the Epworth League itself in the estab-

lishing of numerous local institutes, rendered it impossible longer to continue the Epworth League assemblies as they had been originally organized, and the plan was abandoned, as has been suggested above, to give way for the Epworth League institutes now operating in large numbers throughout the whole territory of the United States.

## CHAPTER VI

### ORGANIZED EFFORTS FOR ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY

For a score or more years after the planting of the first chautauqua in western New York, all the new promotions of a similar character continued to operate as independent units, or practically so. Local officers and committees secured suitable grounds, provided the necessary buildings, made all arrangements for securing talent, and went their own sweet ways without much thought of what it was costing, or what might be accomplished by intelligent coöperation.

The chautauqua was yet new. It had made and was making a tremendous appeal to all who had a care for cultural advantages. For the most part assemblies were well patronized and there was plenty of money forthcoming to meet all requirements without much worrying on the part of the management. No particular thought had as yet been given to devising ways and means for more economical operation, or the conservation of the strength and morale of the people who were engaged to appear upon the platforms.

## 92 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

But by the late nineties, after the flush of novelty had subsided and operating chautauquas began to assume the nature of a business, costs began to impress themselves upon the attention of managers, and ways and means began to be studied for keeping the expenses within the scope of possible receipts. There are evidences, also, that the more kindly hearted had by this time begun to consider that the excessive railroad jumps and oftentimes sleepless nights being endured by talent in making widely scattered dates, constituted real hardships, and was really a shamefully cruel and wicked method of procedure.

Evidently the first movement seriously to attempt to remedy these evils was made in the Middle West. In 1897 William Orr, of Clarinda, Iowa, J. A. Davis, of Boulder, Colorado, and A. H. Limerick, of Winfield, Kansas, got their heads together and worked out a tentative plan which developed, within the same year, into what became known as the Western Federation of Chautauquas. J. A. Davis was elected president, and A. H. Limerick, secretary.

The towns associated in this Federation were Boulder, Colorado; Winfield, Kansas; Ottawa, Kansas; Carthage, Marysville, Wathena, near St.

Joseph, Missouri; Salem and Beatrice, Nebraska; Devil's Lake, North Dakota, and Clarinda, Iowa.

As soon as this organization was effected, the officers began making contracts with talent for appearances on all programs in the Federation. The leading thought was at first economy, but later other considerations entered in, such as talent quality, and local management.

Beginning in 1897, two meetings of the officers and representatives of the various towns were held each year. The first was held immediately after the close of the last chautauqua in the Federation, while it was all fresh in memory, and was for the purpose of making reports on, and comparison of, all talent used. At this meeting the several secretaries furnished the general secretary with a list of such talent as was desired by them for the following season. Armed with this information, the general secretary got into immediate communication with all talent asked for, and, by negotiation, was able to accomplish much in the interest of economy. Prices were secured on attractions for varying periods, such as one day, three days, five days, and ten days.

When all this data had been collected and com-

piled, a second meeting was held, at which an earnest effort was made so to arrange dates as to use this talent as fully as possible, and with as few open dates as could be. It was here that much difficulty was encountered. As the federation was a purely mutual affair, there was no central authority, and it was with great difficulty that dates were arranged with even approximate satisfaction to the member towns.

This pioneer organization in the interest of economy continued its operation for a period of three years, and then suspended. In the meantime a larger and more powerful organization had sprung up, having the same general objects in view, and the lesser had to give way to the greater. This was the International Chautauqua Alliance, which, as its name suggests, was intended to serve the mutual interests of local chautauquas wherever they might be located.

Whether the idea was borrowed from the practice of the Western Federation is not known; but at any rate other leaders in chautauqua thought were busy with problems of economy and efficiency in the late nineties. Prominent among these were George E. Vincent, Sol C. Dickey, W. L. Davidson, J. E. Moseley, and W. H. Hitchcock. After numerous

conferences an organization was effected in 1899 with the name of The International Chautauqua Alliance. It was launched on a rather pretentious scale, and was intended to embrace within the scope of its influence all local chautauquas regardless of geographical location. It was evidently a serious attempt to standardize and stabilize chautauqua management, to get better results with the same outlay, or equal results with lesser outlay of expense. As the work progressed strenuous efforts were made for the general improvement of every phase and department of chautauqua management.

The pressing need, as it appeared just then, was for a centralization of management interests, with as full sanctions of authority as could be secured from men who had formed the habit of acting independently. The experience of the Western Federation had shown that, without any such authority, it was exceedingly difficult to induce local managers to agree on talent selections, and more difficult still to get them to shift dates from their accustomed period in order to make it possible to use the talent that had been secured in an orderly and economic way.

The idea was an ambitious one, and aimed at nothing less than the organization of all locally

managed assemblies into one gigantic combination that "solid bookings" of talent might be realized with large savings in salaries and transportation, and that more rational routings might be accomplished for the benefit of talent as well as managers. Open dates constituted the big chautauqua menace in that day. It should also be noted that the promoters of the Alliance had in mind the setting of certain high standards, as to program and other activities, which they hoped to be able to enforce in connection with every assembly taking membership in the Alliance.

But the bigger dream of the original promoters never came true. The Alliance was launched with about fifteen assemblies represented, and after five years of operation the membership had only grown to twenty-eight assemblies. These were Aurora, Illinois; Bay View, Michigan; Cawker City, Kansas; Chautauqua, New York; Delavan Lake, Wisconsin; Hiawatha Lake, Ohio; Island Park, Rome City, Indiana; Lithia Springs, Illinois; Lincoln, Nebraska; Miami Valley, Dayton, Ohio; Monona Lake, Madison, Wisconsin; Monteagle, Tennessee; Mountain Lake Park, Maryland; Old Salem, Petersburg, Illinois; Pertle Springs, Warrensburg, Missouri; Park Hill, Carlisle, Kentucky; Pennsylvania, Mt. Gretna,



Pennsylvania; Piasa, Chautauqua, Illinois; Pontiac, Illinois; Rockford, Illinois; Rock River, Dixon, Illinois; Tama, Iowa; Tri-State, Ashland, Kentucky; Washington Grove, Maryland; Washington, Iowa; Weldon Springs, Clinton, Illinois; Wheeling, West Virginia; Winona Lake, Warsaw, Indiana.

This group constituted only about ten per cent of the assemblies then in operation throughout the country. The local managers seemed loath to surrender any portion of their erstwhile liberty, and then there had to be reckoned with the natural suspicions, entertained by many, that there might be something sinister in whatsoever well intended enterprise, with so large ambitions and so pretentious settings. It appears that the largest membership the Alliance enjoyed was in the year 1912, when thirty-nine assemblies appear on their list.

The towns included in the Alliance were scattered from the Atlantic coast to central Colorado. It followed that great difficulty was encountered in efforts to establish rational datings and routing of talent. And, while much of a constructive character was developed, the problem of the economical use of talent remained unsolved when the Alliance went out of existence in 1915.

In 1905, when W. L. Davidson was president,

and Jasper L. Douthitt was secretary, it was the practice to hold one general meeting per year. The representatives would range themselves about a great table and talk talent by the hour. Each representative had ready a comprehensive report on all talent used. This embraced a tabulation of the name, the bureau from which secured, the fee paid, the subject used, and finally the grading as to quality. To arrive at this by the law of averages, the Alliance had adopted a word of five letters which was employed as a merchant uses such words in marking cost of goods. For example, suppose that the word employed is "grade." Then "G" would signify extra good, "R" would be good, "A" would be fair, "D" would mean poor, and "E" a failure. By this means not only might the quality of talent be determined, but at the same time a gauge could be set for determining the appreciation of secretaries and managers. There can be no question that the practice did much to eliminate poor talent and to encourage the use of the best that the country afforded.

Often, at these meetings, large selections would be made for talent for the succeeding year. W. L. Davidson conducted a booking bureau, and, being a

high officer in the Alliance, enjoyed a natural advantage over all outside bureaus. It is said that at some of these annual meetings Mr. Davidson would succeed in booking practically the whole program of all the participating assemblies.

As time went on, and the competition for business grew more intense, the Alliance seems to have introduced some coercive measures intended to bring some pressure to bear, in a polite way, to induce local managements to link up with the Alliance program of development, and to discourage the growth of competing enterprises. In fact, within a year from the time that the Alliance entered the field, the Western Federation found it impossible to make contracts with certain talent, because the Alliance had served notice on such attractions as it desired to control, that they would refuse to employ them if they signed any contracts with the Western Federation. The Alliance was so much larger in its scope, and promised so much greater field, that forced to choose between the two organizations, talent naturally went with the Alliance. This sounded the death knell of the Western Federation, and created such feeling with the western managers that some of them refused, for five or six years, to join the Alli-

ance, and then they joined only because they were practically forced to do so in order to be eligible to book the talent they desired.

In this connection it is interesting to note that a few years later the International Chautauqua Alliance, by unanimous vote of its representatives, passed a resolution boycotting all talent on the Redpath lists, because some of the Redpath managers were interested in conducting "railroad chautauquas."

There have always been circuit managers who maintained that the word "independent," as applied to locally managed chautauquas, was a misnomer. It would appear that there are some things in connection with the manipulation of contracts, and the coercive methods sometimes employed by the "Associations" to lend a considerable show of color to this contention.

But, all these considerations aside, the International Chautauqua Alliance performed a real service to the public. Every member assembly was pledged to the maintenance of the highest standards, and no countenance was given to adventurers or quacks who might seek to capitalize the good name and reputation of the chautauquas for purposes of personal gain at the sacrifice of real service to the people.

No considerable success was achieved in economical management, but much was accomplished by way of better understandings, the education of managers as to needs and ideals, and especially in the matter of selecting talent that had proven its worth in real accomplishment upon the platform.

The following report, written by George H. Turner, and published in *Talent* for December, 1905, furnishes a rather clear insight to the actuating motives and purposes of this organization, which will be seen to be the highest and best:

To have lived so long, and to have constantly increased in membership is conclusive demonstration that the International Chautauqua Alliance was needed, and that it has, at least in a measure, realized and fulfilled its obligations. From its organization the Alliance has been a source of encouragement and help to chautauquas organized for permanency and high purposes. From the first, also, it has exerted a strong influence toward securing a unity of purpose and the adoption of a high standard among chautauqua managers. That, out of more than three hundred and fifty chautauquas in the country, so many are honestly endeavoring to realize, within the limits of their conditions, the exalted ideals of Bishop Vincent and Lewis Miller is more largely due to the influence of this organization than is ordin-

## 102 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

arily recognized. Its annual meetings have been gatherings for honest and frank comparison of purpose and method, and for candid measurement of the departure of the chautauqua movement from the original chautauqua idea.

The recent meeting was in every way the best thus far held. It was more largely attended, both in number of chautauquas represented and in number of delegates enrolled. A number of the leading assemblies had both the delegate and his alternate present, thereby making doubly sure the gleanings of every helpful suggestion or hint. The papers and discussions were not mere compilations of "high-sounding words," nor were they devoted to things theoretical.

The practical problems confronting every assembly were practically discussed. Throughout the meeting the highest standard was presupposed. That being granted without argument, the practical question became how to bring the chautauqua to it. This question contained many subdivisions, as equipment of an assembly for the best work; how to get the people to support such a high standard institution, and how to care for them during the assemblies so that a happy and profitable vacation would be assured them; and how the program should be constructed to secure the end aimed at.

The practical nature of the meeting will be sufficiently indicated by the subjects of the vari-

ous papers presented for discussion. These were "The Local Press — How to Treat and Use It;" "Are Daily Forenoon Sermons Practical or Preferable to the Eleven O'Clock Lecture?" "Evening Preludes at a Chautauqua — Their Use and Abuse;" "Chautauqua Tenters — How to Secure and Care for Them;" "Present Status and Outlook of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle," and "Publicity and Best Methods of Advertising."

The opportunity for acquaintance and conversation with other chautauqua managers is one of the greatest benefits of the annual Alliance meetings. Recognizing this, provision is always made for one or more sessions devoted to informal discussion behind closed doors. These informal sessions proved of utmost value in the recent meeting, although it is impossible to adequately report them. In one of these sessions the discussion was upon the rapidly increasing cost of talent. An effort was made to determine what would be the real money value of any attraction, and it was suggested that such value is just the sum the attraction could earn if it were to rent its own hall, do its own advertising and present itself under its own management in any given community. A selling price larger than the attraction would earn by presenting itself in the same community under equally favorable circumstances is in the nature of an arbitrary overcharge which is

## 104 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

oppressive to the purchasing chautauqua management. The bureau's commission is, of course, a legitimate addition to the selling price. If this rule be a fair one, then it becomes at once evident that many attractions are greatly overpaid. A frank, candid and kind discussion of this suggested rule for determining the real money value of an attraction by all interested parties would be appreciated by the members of the Alliance.

One of the most significant features of the meeting was the testimony from every manager whose experience covered a long term of years, that, after all, the only things worth while for a chautauqua program are the things that are cultural. The time comes, they all said, when the merely popular ceases to draw, and even the big, sensational features fail to secure the crowd. Then disaster looms big in the future unless the work of preceding years has developed a constituency which hungers for food for brain and soul. Long life for a chautauqua, so teach these men of experience, depends upon the emphasis placed on religion and education in the program building. After flashing eloquence and glowing word picture have passed away, truth remains, and the chautauqua founded on truth endures.

Another effort at economy and better service was attempted in the year 1913, by the formation of what was called The Chautauqua Union, which



embraced a limited number of assemblies in Illinois. George H. Turner, then manager of Old Salem Chautauqua, was elected president, and A. C. Folsom of Pontiac, Illinois, secretary. The towns represented were Rockford, Pontiac, Lithia Springs, Old Salem, and Piasa Bluffs, all in Illinois. Later Weldon Springs Assembly at Clinton, Illinois, and Miami Valley at Dayton, Ohio, joined the Union. As Mr. Turner says, this was more a business organization than an Alliance. Its primary function was to arrange groups of dates for the coöperating assemblies, which would make possible the securing of better grades of talent at more reasonable prices.

This Union accomplished much for its members. But the old time difficulty of arranging satisfactory dates was always a great hindrance. After a few years the idea was abandoned, and so far as we are able to determine, this was the last serious effort ever made to organize the local chautauquas in such a way as to permit of local management and yet furnish relief from exorbitant costs by something like wholesale buying by a centralized authority.

The same object was aimed at, by the employment of a radically different system of operation, by Keith Vawter in 1904. Mr. Vawter had studied costs in the light of the universal dissatisfaction

under the old practice, and resolved to employ sufficient talent to make up a strong program of nine days' duration, and sell it outright at greatly reduced price, to local chautauqua managers. Mr. Vawter's original conception was service to independent chautauquas by furnishing low cost, uniform programs to a sufficient number of towns to make up a season's work on the part of talent.

But local managers were shy, and not more than half enough to supply a season could be induced to coöperate. It therefore became necessary for Mr. Vawter to book other towns as new promotions to fill out his season. His worst obstacle to success was that he always found in the towns visited some local person who thought he knew more about running a chautauqua than an expert who had spent years in its study.

Mr. Vawter failed to secure the necessary coöperation, just as the Federation, the Alliance, and other efforts had failed. The Western Federation went out of business. The International Chautauqua Alliance went out of business. Mr. Vawter decided that he must either abandon the field or promote a business of his own entirely apart from so-called independent interests. In other words, the circuit chautauqua came into being to give free expression

to the coöperative principle, for which managers had striven for years without success. And successful circuit managers were prevented from adapting the circuit plan of operation in local assemblies by the flat refusal of local managers to lend their coöperation to such an arrangement. In the end it meant either to stay out of the business, or promote a circuit and assume the entire management.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE THIRD GENERATION

And then came the youngsters, the chautauqua grandchildren. Bumptious, noisy, and assertive they were. In sheer exuberance of spirits they finally overran the whole plantation.

The Parent Chautauqua had exercised its high prerogatives of origination and example. It had been sane, strong, moral, and highly respectable. It had borne fruitage in kind, and these had transplanted themselves at favored spots throughout the length and breadth of the land. These scions and seedlings had, in the process of their development, encountered all the problems that needs must arise in any attempt to make universal application of a local success.

The chautauqua children of the first generation had, for the most part, maintained the high respectability of the family, though far removed from parental care and oversight. Some had not behaved so well, having fallen victims to the love of money and a predisposition to jazz. By this we mean that in some instances the patronage did not come

up to the expectations of the local managers, which fact influenced certain of them to turn strong attention to the money consideration. This fact exhibited itself next season on the chautauqua program in the form of "attractive" attractions, some of them capable of drawing big gate receipts, but incapable of delivering any message of lasting value. These appeals to the multitude, by the employment of platformists of more or less sensational character, have always failed to furnish the foundations necessary to the development of a wholesome and lasting chautauqua sentiment. A few, just a few, had passed away at a tender age, illy conceived or thoughtlessly exposed to atmospheres or altitudes out of harmony with their frail natures.

Then burst the grandchildren upon the scene; a red-blooded brood of circuit chautauquas. First a small group, then hundreds, then thousands. Audacious youngsters they were, disdainful of camp grounds, woods, lakes and rivers, auditoriums, lecture halls and class rooms. They had but a rag for a roof, and their voices were attuned to the winds of the prairies. Everything on wheels and rattling all over Christendom, they went about dispensing modern culture to the millions who had not the time

## 110 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

or the means for the more sedate and orderly gatherings by the lake side.

It was but natural that grandpas and grandmas should be somewhat disturbed by the antics and the prattle of the youngsters. Over the tops of their spectacles they studied, with anxious eyes, the pranks on the playground of the new chautauqua movement. Many a sad philosopher voiced the fears of anxious hearts that the third generation of the chautauqua family, by so radically changing the cut of its skirts and the style of its neckties, was headed pell mell to the bad. "What is going to become of this new generation?" is the perennial problem in ordinary life, and why should it not have been a problem in chautauqua life?

Even as late as the year 1908, by which time the circuit youngsters had taken on their true form and no real wolf's teeth had been discovered in their mouths, the lamented Dr. Frank W. Gunsaulus, then a veritable lion of the platform, felt certain that the circuit chautauquas were productive of no good. The Doctor had the night before delivered one of his great lectures at the Waterloo, Iowa, Chautauqua, conducted on the so-called independent plan. The audience had been small and the usual enthusiasm had failed to materialize. At the rail-

way station the Doctor ran across Keith Vawter, and proceeded at once to lay him out as a disturber of the peace and quiet of the world. "These circuit chautauquas," snapped the Doctor, "are sapping the life-blood out of the old chautauquas. They will all be on the rocks of disaster within three years." He then proceeded at length, and with great earnestness, to point out to Mr. Vawter how a great and good work, high and dignified, was being swiftly ruined by a circuit venture that never could hope to be of equal or of similar service.

Yet, strange to say, this same Doctor Gunsaulus lived to "go down the line" as a stellar attraction on the chautauqua circuit. At Newton, Iowa, after having spoken to a large and appreciative circuit audience on a bright Sunday afternoon, he told this same Vawter that his views had completely changed. "It was a magnificent audience," said he. "The Sabbath atmosphere was undisturbed, the whole setting was lovely and left nothing to be desired. In consenting to lecture on this circuit I at first felt I was lowering my dignity. What I have seen convinces me of what I otherwise could not have believed."

The case of the conversion of Doctor Gunsaulus to the circuit chautauqua plan is not unique, but

## 112 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

fully typical of scores of others, as the first shocks of surprise wore away and a better understanding was developed.

Time is ever marked by change. The unnumbered units of the vast universe rotate, revolve, and revel in relativity. The big round world heaves up her mountains in volcanic thrusts, shifts and slides her rocky frame work, sets on fire the heavens with falling thunderbolts, and drenches hill and dale with floods from the firmament. And even what Lord Byron called "the unchangeable deep" remains for no single moment of time in even approximate quiescence.

The founders of the original assembly having its home on Lake Chautauqua, New York, made a notable contribution to civilization by the zeal they exercised in demanding that all the assemblies conform strictly to the ideals, standards, and programs as originally established. There can be no question but that this early training, in a good home, continues to be a blessing unto this day, and is perhaps the underlying reason why the chautauqua, as a means of culture, has found a place of so high esteem among the best men and women of our time. Like Epictetus of old, let us not concern ourselves about things beyond our control, but philosophically



accept the modern chautauqua on wheels as the practical means for the universal application of a truly great idea.

Keith Vawter of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, was the first to conceive, and to put to practical use, the idea of a circuit of chautauquas. The word "circuit," as here used, refers to that practice, now so generally in use, of booking uniform programs of chautauqua talent through consecutive dates, to a considerable number of communities, and supplying from a central headquarters the equipment, as well as the management, of all transactions entering into the building and the delivery of such chautauquas. The first blazings on the pioneer chautauqua trail clearly bear the legend "Keith Vawter 1904."

For some years prior to this time Mr. Vawter had been connected with the Redpath Lyceum Bureau, itself a pioneer lyceum management, founded by James Redpath in the year 1868, and with a history of uninterrupted and increasing service. The main office was in Boston at that time, with various branch offices located at strategic points farther west. Mr. Vawter was located at Des Moines, Iowa, from whence, in the prosecution of his lyceum business, he had found ample opportunity to study the problems and needs of the chautauqua move-

## 114 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

ment, as it had developed in independent units throughout the West. In 1902 Mr. Vawter became one of the partners and general officers of the Redpath Bureau, and removed to Chicago to take charge of the western department. In an attempt to bring order out of the somewhat chaotic conditions that prevailed in the lyceum field at that time, he was brought more intimately into touch with the independent chautauqua managers, particularly in connection with negotiations for talent on the Redpath list. Perhaps one of the first considerations to impress itself upon his mind was the expensive and wasteful method, or lack of method, by which chautauqua attractions were railroaded about the country to make their scattered dates. In those days it was not uncommon for a lecturer or a concert company to appear, for example, on Monday in Ohio, jump to Iowa for Wednesday, and perhaps into Kentucky or Tennessee for Friday; thence to South Dakota for the following Monday, and to Indiana for Wednesday, thus spending more than half of their time on railroad trains, at great expense, and making their platform appearances in a worn and jaded physical and mental condition. The loss of so much time made it necessary for these attractions to demand larger fees for their scattered appearances,

and there was very evident need for someone to use a strong hand in humanizing and modernizing the whole process of handling chautauqua talent.

There could be no question but that considerable saving could be effected by abandoning the old practice of booking single, isolated dates on platform attractions, and by adopting the more businesslike plan of arranging for their daily appearances over a considerable period of time. Many wastes would thus be eliminated, the energies of the attractions would be conserved so that they would appear always at their best, and a generally higher grade of service could be maintained from a talent standpoint. It was also quite apparent that a program that is good for one rural community should be equally good for another, and that there existed no real reason why the entire chautauqua program for a long list of communities should not be built at a general headquarters, by a manager acquainted with talent and schooled in their management, rather than the old practice of haphazard selection of talent by persons who have had neither the time nor opportunity for careful study of the needs of the times.

Mr. Vawter began the development of plans for the organization of a circuit of chautauquas while

he was yet located in Des Moines. He had become acquainted with Mr. Frank J. Sessions, for some years manager of the Waterloo chautauqua, and with him had, on several occasions, discussed at length not only the glaring need for economic adjustments in handling talent, but also ways and means for bringing them about.

In the summer of 1903 he called into conference J. Roy Ellison, at that time associated with him in the lyceum business, and now of the Ellison-White Chautauquas, and L. H. Maus, then a principal of schools at Glenwood, Iowa, who had done some chautauqua promotion work in western Iowa. At this meeting, held in August at Atlantic, Iowa, the circuit chautauqua idea was freely and fully discussed and preliminary plans were adopted for putting it into execution. Mr. Vawter's active nature, his propensity for hard work, and his acknowledged foresight, gave him the natural leadership in these conferences, and no one will dispute that he was, from the beginning, the pioneer thinker and the master-hand in laying the foundations and shaping the policies of the first chautauqua circuit.

After a thorough survey of the field to be served, a careful taking of stock as to financial resources, and a most scrupulous self-examination, the deter-

mination was reached at a conference held in Des Moines, December 30, 1903, to launch into the chautauqua field on a new and untried venture.

The Western Federation had made an effort at economy by endeavoring to use a number of attractions at all member assemblies, and the International Chautauqua Alliance was at that very time struggling with the same problem. But neither had been successful in inducing that degree of coöperation between members to make possible the attainment of their aims, to the degree hoped for by the promoters of these organizations. The necessarily loose construction of a purely mutual concern, with membership widely scattered and with diversified tastes, provided a fundamental obstacle to coöperation. There was very evidently need for centralization, for strong, able, authoritative, general management. If real coöperation was ever to be achieved, something radical needed to be done.

So, suiting the action to the thought, Mr. Vawter set about at once to build a chautauqua program such as would meet the need of any assembly located in the middle west. By long time contracts with talent, rational routing, and reduction of overhead expense, he was soon prepared to furnish complete uniform programs to local chautauqua organizations

## 118 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

at a cost appreciably below what they had been accustomed to pay under the old plan for programs of much inferior quality.

To put this idea to use it became necessary to cover the entire territory to be served and secure contracts with local managements in sufficient numbers to constitute a circuit. At that time Mr. Vawter had in mind chiefly the serving of assemblies already established, and thought of new promotions only as an alternative, should it be found impossible to secure a sufficient number of established assemblies to make the venture worth while.

The proposed project was not without its apparent difficulties. And as the work progressed, a score or more appeared where one could be foreseen. But an idea had been developed, the vision of large service loomed big, and no discouragement was allowed seriously to dampen the ardor of these pioneers in the circuit chautauqua field.

In after years when success had perched her banners upon the tent poles of the circuits, managers could direct all movements in the field from a general headquarters. But in these days of the beginnings, it was necessary for the "brass-collars" themselves to get out on the firing line; and it was by this means that the contracts were secured for Mr.

Vawter's first circuit in 1904. Vawter and Ellison secured most of the contracts themselves by personal solicitation.

But these adventurers had not gone many days on the new trail when they began to encounter thorns and thistles in the way. Preconceived notions abounded everywhere. The old chautauqua rut was deep, and many had fallen into it, and found its edges hard to scale. There was discovered evidences of that age-long suspicion of non-resident leadership, and the abhorrent fear of foreign domination. In almost every town visited there bobbed up a conscientious objector who freely confessed to knowing, from his obscure corner, more about running chautauquas than experts who had given years to its study over wide areas.

The result of this booking campaign was by no means satisfactory. In all Iowa and Nebraska only seven existing chautauqua managements could be brought to the coöperative basis. To these the circuit program was sold outright at an agreed price. And the adventurers pushed on, effecting new promotions in other towns to fill out the circuit.

Some of these promotions were made under contracts providing for "first money" up to an agreed amount. Others were based on block season ticket





subscriptions. Still others provided a guarantee by citizens for the advance sale of season tickets. The painful lack of uniformity in these contracts bears mute testimony to the difficulties that had to be surmounted in this first attempt to put the circuit idea to practical use.

There appears on one of these pages a facsimile of one of these early contracts; and it will be observed that in general trend and purpose it embodies fundamental features and practices that remain in vogue generally to this day, after twenty years of continuous operation. These include the guarantee of an advance sale of season tickets, suitable grounds, police protection, and coöperation by second parties, and the furnishing of all talent, advertising, and management by first party.

The name adopted for this new management was The Standard Chautauqua Bureau, an adaptation from the Standard Lyceum Bureau which had been Mr. Vawter's trade name before his connection with Redpath, and had been in existence since 1889. The main office was located in Chicago. The several towns booked on this pioneer circuit, and the chautauqua dates as later arranged were as follows:

July 1 to 10 inclusive, Marshalltown, Iowa.

July 4 to 12 inclusive, McGregor Heights, Iowa.

IOWA FALLS CHAUTAUQUA  
Program Furnished by  
THE STANDARD CHAUTAUQUA BUREAU  
July 10-19, 1904

Mrs. Roudebush,  
Morning Hour Lecturer

H. P. Harrison,  
Platform Manager

FIRST DAY

- Afternoon — Concert, CHICAGO LADY ENTERTAINERS  
MRS. ESTELLE M. CLARK, Reader  
Evening — Prelude, CHICAGO LADY ENTERTAINERS  
Lecture, REV. JOHN ROACH STRATTON

SECOND DAY

- Afternoon — Prelude, CHICAGO LADY ENTERTAINERS  
Lecture, DR. D. F. FOX  
Evening — Prelude, CHICAGO LADY ENTERTAINERS  
Moving Pictures by DR. W. ROBERTSON

THIRD DAY

- Afternoon — Prelude, CHICAGO LADY ENTERTAINERS  
Lecture, DR. CASPER W. HIATT  
Evening — Drama, "HIAWATHA," illustrated by Moving Pictures

FOURTH DAY

- Afternoon — GIANT COLORED QUARTETTE  
Entertainment, EDWIN M. BRUSH, Magician  
Evening — Prelude, GIANT COLORED QUARTETTE  
Joint Debate, "The Political Issues of the Day"  
CONG. J. ADAM BEDE  
JUDGE MARTIN J. WADE

FIFTH DAY

- Afternoon — GIANT COLORED QUARTETTE  
Musical Novelties and Juggling, GEORGE W. GARRETSON  
Evening — Prelude, GIANT COLORED QUARTETTE  
Lecture, "Moving Pictures," W. ROBERT GOSS

SIXTH DAY

- Afternoon — GIANT COLORED QUARTETTE  
Lecture, "Flying," DR. T. BAIRD COLLINS  
GEORGE W. GARRETSON  
Lecture, GEORGE L. McNUTT

SEVENTH DAY

- Afternoon — Concert, TEMPLE MALE QUARTETTE  
Readings, MISS VICTORIA LYNN  
Evening — Prelude, TEMPLE MALE QUARTETTE  
Lecture, "The Key to the 20th Century,"  
DR. THOMAS E. GREEN

EIGHTH DAY

- Afternoon — Prelude, TEMPLE MALE QUARTETTE  
Lecture, GEORGE L. McNUTT  
Evening — Prelude, TEMPLE MALE QUARTETTE  
Lecture, DR. FRANK G. SMITH

NINTH DAY

- Afternoon — Prelude, TEMPLE MALE QUARTETTE  
Chalk Talks by ASH DAVIS  
Evening — Prelude, TEMPLE MALE QUARTETTE  
Lecture, BISHOP HARTZELL

July 7 to 17 inclusive, Des Moines, Iowa.  
July 10 to 19 inclusive, Iowa Falls, Iowa.  
July 13 to 23 inclusive, Sioux City, Iowa.  
July 16 to 25 inclusive, Albert Lea, Minnesota.  
July 20 to 28 inclusive, Waterloo, Iowa.  
July 23 to 31 inclusive, Chariton, Iowa.  
July 26 to August 3 inclusive, Bedford, Iowa.  
July 29 to August 7 inclusive, Glenwood, Iowa.  
August 1 to 11 inclusive, Fremont, Nebraska  
August 5 to 14 inclusive, Fullerton, Nebraska.  
August 9 to 18 inclusive, Lexington, Nebraska.  
August 13 to 21 inclusive, Auburn, Nebraska.

The program provided for the list of towns on this circuit was a truly wonderful combination of talent. The daily activities were divided into three distinct departments. Sessions for study were held in the cool of the morning, and William I. Crane, George L. McNutt, Mrs. C. E. Risser, Mrs. Roubush, Prof. Edgar A. Ross, Dr. Frank G. Tyrrell, and others, were engaged to appear at these forenoon sessions to conduct institutes, of an intensive study character, along many lines of popular interest.

The afternoon program opened at two-thirty with a musical prelude of some forty-five minutes duration, followed by lectures on interesting themes by such well known platform stars as Dr. C. W. Hiatt, Rabbi Leon Harrison, Dr. A. B. Storms, General

## 124 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Z. T. Sweeney, John Roach Straton, T. B. Collins, William J. Bryan, Bishop Hartzell, Dr. Thomas E. Green, Dr. Frank W. Gunsaulus, Kerr Boyce Tupper, Sam Jones, Champ Clark, Bishop C. H. Fowler, Congressman C. H. Grosvenor, and Frank R. Roberson. One of the noted attractions was a debate between J. Adam Bede, popular Minnesota congressman, and Judge Martin J. Wade, which afforded no end of entertainment and much valuable instruction.

The desire to be strictly up-to-date is evidenced by the fact that T. B. Collins appeared as a regular program feature demonstrating the practicability of the flying machine as proposed by Wright Brothers. His model, operating on a wire, excited great interest and afforded no end of amusement.

In the cool of the evening, with gas lights flickering under a great canvas top, the people assembled to listen to the Chicago Lady Entertainers, Edwin Brush, the magician, the Giant Quartette with their jubilee songs and negro spirituals, the famous Temple Quartette of Boston, and Victoria Lynn, or D. W. Robertson with his famous stereopticon and moving pictures. The chautauqua dates for McGregor Heights beginning on July 4th, naturally called for a pyrotechnic display, and the program

outlined boldly promised a fine display of fireworks as a part of the evening chautauqua program. Adrian M. Newens, Clifford Walker, and George Garretson were other large contributing features to the entertainment success of this first circuit venture under the canvas tops.

It will be observed by reference to the dates of the chautauquas on this circuit, that a plan had been provided for continuous operation of this chautauqua program, from the opening date on July 1st at Marshalltown, Iowa, to the closing on August 21st at Auburn, Nebraska.

Up to this time it should be remembered there had been no serious thought of attempting any radical alterations in the general plan of chautauqua operation. The practice of outdoor assemblies, managed by local citizens, had been thoroughly established after years of use, and was succeeding very well at every point where the patronage was great enough to justify the high costs that were inevitable under such a plan. The transition that marked what finally amounted to nothing short of a revolution in chautauqua management did not all come about in a day. It was rather the result gradually arrived at by what G. Bernard Shaw refers to as "circumstantial selection."

## 126 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

At the beginning, Mr. Vawter had in mind chiefly the matter of delivering chautauqua talent, at greatly reduced cost, by booking a whole program unit uniformly throughout a select group of towns. He chose the state of Iowa as the territory where the experiment should be made. This field afforded him the opportunity to serve several local chautauqua managements already organized and active, and to promote a sufficient number of others to provide a means for applying his idea. While negotiating contracts this first season he offered what may be called a basic program, designed to be delivered uniformly to all towns visited, and carried a list of additional talent from which further selection might be made by the local parties wherever it was deemed advisable.

For this basic program he quoted a definite contract price. This price was far below that at which the same attractions could have been secured by independent local managements. The low price quoted was made possible by the savings in railroad transportation and the unbroken employment of talent without costly open time interfering. In towns where additional attractions were desired such attractions were added to the basic program at an agreed added cost.

It so befell, however, that many adjustments had to be made this first year to humor prejudices and to satisfy certain whims that inevitably make their appearance, as resistant forces, wherever important experiments are being tried out. Thus at some of his first year towns, Mr. Vawter contracted to deliver his entire program at a given price. At others he contracted for coöperation by local citizens with a provision for receiving first money up to an agreed amount. At others he laid the foundation of the guarantee that remained for many years a feature of chautauqua contracts, by securing block subscriptions for season tickets, or straight guarantees for the sale of a specified number of such tickets in advance.

That this initial adventure in the circuit chautauqua field did not prove to be a financial success was largely attributable to the failure to put into effect everywhere the provisions of these contracts. Some of the parties engaged in the promotion of this enterprise on the field, while freely adding special attractions to the basic program, failed to require the necessary extra payment therefor. And this practice was sufficiently widespread that the receipts fell short of the expenditures this first year by several thousand dollars. The more faint-hearted of Mr.

## 128 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Vawter's associates hesitated to assume the hazard of another venture along the same line. The circuit chautauqua harp was hung upon the willow, and Mr. Vawter was left alone to figure out wherein the plans had miscarried, and to consider the future.

It should be stated here, however, to the everlasting credit of Keith Vawter, that from the first conception of the circuit chautauqua idea, through whatever difficulties and discouragements that arose, he never faltered in his faith that the people of the Middle West would respond to the high appeal of a properly conducted chautauqua, once it had demonstrated its usefulness, and they came to fairly understand its real value.

This initial venture had fortunately determined two important points. One of these was that, by circuit management, superior programs could be delivered at a cost far below that of solitary bookings. The other was that the managers of local chautauquas, while favorable to some kinds of coöperation by means of which they might hope to escape from high costs and thus evade financial disaster, were, with a few exceptions, not only unable to see the advantages of the proposed coöperative circuit plan, but in many cases, openly hostile to what they styled "the interference of outside influences."



There was evidently but two horns to the dilemma. One was to quit. That was unthinkable. The other was to abandon all thought of coöperative service to established chautauquas and promote a brand new circuit of his own. And Mr. Vawter grasped that horn.

Out of the murky atmosphere of the season of 1904, Mr. Vawter emerged with a clarified vision. He took his losses philosophically and set about to liquidate all outstanding obligations. Means were adopted to improve the wobbly gait of the infant circuit. A scrutinizing study was made of past experiences. Search was made for leaks. Determination was strong to profit by all discoverable mistakes, and to make sure that substantial foundations be now laid upon which a superstructure of both beauty and strength could be built. Of one thing he had become thoroughly convinced. That one thing was that, to make a success of this new venture along untried ways, it would be necessary to get for his major helpers men whose conceptions of chautauqua promotion had not been molded by previous lyceum or chautauqua experience. The application of a new principle is always hindered by recollections of the old. The old adage has it "It is hard to teach an old dog new tricks." As

Bonaparte found it necessary, in order to have his revolutionary ideas of military operations carried out, to make his generals "out of mud," so Mr. Vawter found it necessary to break all connections with any who held preconceived notions of chautauqua affairs. With new men, fresh and full of enthusiasm, it would be possible to go ahead with new plans along new ways, to new accomplishments.

And in this connection it should be recorded that Charles F. Horner, out in the state of Nebraska, had already given evidence of being specially equipped by predisposition and native traits to carry to success important engagements in this promising though uncultivated field. While never directly associated with Mr. Vawter in the territory east of the Missouri, his personality soon became fully stamped upon all that was being done farther west to introduce and establish the circuit chautauqua idea. We mention the matter here only because of his association with Mr. Vawter through his first few years of circuit promotion. The more complete account of his accomplishments will be found recorded in another chapter.

About this time there appeared upon the scene Mr. George C. Rheinfrank, a German Methodist

Episcopal preacher, located at Le Mars, Iowa. Mr. Rheinfrank had the true pioneer spirit, indomitable courage, and a sublime devotion to the chautauqua idea. Once associated with Mr. Vawter he took to the fields as a bee goes in search of honey, and devoted his splendid energies to booking contracts for a greatly extended chautauqua circuit. He was a man of wonderful earnestness and zeal, and succeeded in selling on the basis of the actual merit of the program offered, without deviation or qualifications. He was a strong factor in laying the substantial foundations of the Redpath Chautauqua System, which, succeeding the Standard Chautauqua Bureau, assumed the complete management of everything entering into the construction and operation of the circuit chautauqua business.

In the same year Mr. Vawter induced Theodore F. Graham, then a professor at the Wesleyan University at Mitchell, South Dakota, to join him in the further extension of the circuit idea. Here was another man of high ideals and ablaze with enthusiasm for practical service. He threw himself, without reserve, into the promotional department of this expanding business. He was a remarkable success in booking contracts, was possessed of fine poise and

## 132 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

judgment, and inspired a certain confidence and loyalty among chautauqua patrons that time failed to weaken and competitors failed to shake.

Mr. Graham continued as an associate of Mr. Vawter until 1921, when he removed to California. He served through all these years as President of the Redpath Vawter Chautauqua System, and covered the great circuit so many times and in so many capacities that he became personally known to practically the entire population of the whole territory served.

Few men have rendered larger service to the development of the circuit chautauqua than T. F. Graham, and should there ever be a Chautauqua Hall of Fame, his name should be inscribed well toward the top of the list.

The result of this pioneering, maintained at high pressure by men who thoroughly believed in their mission, was a list of thirty-three towns in Iowa, Minnesota, and Missouri to which, in return for intelligent and sympathetic coöperative boosting, Mr. Vawter was prepared in 1907 to bring not only a rich and royal uniform program, but tents, seating, and the whole physical paraphernalia necessary for the delivery of a six-day chautauqua of high

grade, built and managed exclusively and wholly from his office headquarters in Chicago.

Thus from small beginnings, pushing out into new fields with an untried and unknown product, assailed by many critics, suspected by many curious-minded people, openly attacked by the "open town" element in every community, and beset by all the difficulties of pioneer work, Mr. Vawter gradually surrounding himself with lieutenants of ability and courage, built up in the Middle West the Redpath-Vawter Chautauqua System, ministering to hundreds of communities and enjoying the loyal support of hundreds of thousands of satisfied patrons.

Keith Vawter's contribution to the chautauqua movement has been invaluable. He was not only first to sense the needs and develop the means for satisfying them, in a practical way; he kept right on sensing further needs as time went by, and satisfying them also.

Those who took up the chautauqua business as managers after him, fell heir to many ideas which he had tried out to success. The tent makers had nothing to offer at the beginning but oval canvas tops. To provide a platform for use of talent

## 134 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

meant to place it either at one end or in the center at the side, projecting far out into the auditorium and presenting an unsightly and awkward appearance, at best a sorry substitute for a stage. It was Mr. Vawter who conceived the idea of an extension built into the tent at a side center, which he finally developed into a complete stage with arch, curtains, wings, dressing rooms, and every convenience of a play house.

He also thought out and developed the program booklet that became the standard of basic chautauqua publicity, and originated the large, artistic spread, a composite of all talent appearing on the program, which revolutionized chautauqua advertising. Copies of these were freely used by other managers in promoting circuits, for the reason that they visualized, in a striking and convincing way, the bigness of the chautauqua program as a whole. They served to put the celebrity where he rightfully belonged, and to broaden advance attention upon the whole scope of the many sided offerings the complete program provided. Nelson Trimble carried some of these all over Australia and New Zealand in promoting the Ellison-White Chautauquas in those faraway lands.

The dressing up of streets in holiday attire, by

hoisting overhead numerous strings of gay pennants and banners, flags, decorative schemes, and appeals to the eye generally, originated on the Vawter circuits and were quickly adopted by other managers. No chautauqua promoter will deny him his rightful place as a leader in scores of important discoveries and inventions, in the line of publicity, calculated to center attention upon the coming chautauqua assembly as an event of real significance to the communities to be visited.

In addition to his manifold duties as general manager of an untried organization, operating in an untried and unproven field, he found time to think out in detail the practical means for properly seating a tent, and personally directed the building of many styles of seats, benches, chairs, and settees until the right thing was discovered. He it was who abandoned the old style gas lamp and installed a modern system of electric lighting for the auditorium tent.

For twenty years he has steadfastly held to one principle: to keep ahead of the throng, and to stay within proper bounds in program building. He has never booked a freak or a mere drawing card, without substantial merit. He has steadfastly sought to furnish such programs as would contribute

## 136 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

to the general uplift of the race, toward that higher ground and clearer vision in the foreground of the march of progress.

And those who know him best will best remember him as one who always stood solid as a rock, and determinedly intent upon the highest ideals in the extension and development of his business.

The phrase, "The Napoleon of the Chautauquas," by which many of his admirers have been wont to refer to him, was doubtless founded upon an unusual success, itself based upon a principle of life. That principle is that he who establishes the reputation for fair play, beyond the measure of common honesty, has an asset that is never cheaply or readily acquired. But that once attained is worth a hundred times whatever it may have cost.



## CHAPTER VIII

### MORE EARLY CIRCUIT PROMOTION

The year 1904 was a prolific one in chautauqua circles. In that year not only was the first circuit operated, but plans were whipped into shape for the launching of other circuits of a similar character. Upon the clear thinking and careful planning of that year were laid the foundations upon which were to be built in the succeeding years chautauqua circuit managements destined to wield a powerful influence in the Middle West.

From the launching of the Mother Chautauqua at Chautauqua Lake, New York, in 1874, for a period of some twenty years, it does not appear that any one gave serious consideration to a plan for more economic management, or had thought seriously of making the chautauqua available to the whole population of the country. As has been shown, local chautauquas were planted at favorable spots throughout the various states, and for the most part enjoyed reasonable success. They were highly esteemed by all who were privileged to attend them, and all those especially who were interested in the

## 138 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

educational phases of the work were conscious that a vast deal of genuine good was being accomplished.

As has been shown in a previous chapter, as early as 1894 managers of local chautauquas began to realize that the plan of booking platform attractions then in vogue was not only expensive but positively wasteful, and efforts were made in various sections of the country to cut down these costs by forming local chautauquas into associations with the idea of group bookings of the higher priced attractions. But the difficulty of arranging dates satisfactorily always stood in the way of the practical working out of this splendid idea.

No relief having been found in the way of reducing costs, many of the local chautauquas, 'having failed of sufficient support, had finally rung down the curtain and given up in despair.

The solution of the problem came with the birth of an entirely new idea. Instead of seeking to reform the old practices, an entirely new and revolutionary method of operation was conceived. This was the real beginning of the circuit idea that not only fully controlled the bookings of the higher priced platformists, but finally resulted in the building and booking of uniform programs throughout the territory served. This idea was surging in the

minds of men of vision at widely scattered points in the period we mention, and during the years 1903 and 1904 developed into the determination to enter the circuit chautauqua field with the new plan.

The Midland Chautauqua Circuit sprang from this period. Mr. A. D. Snyder, president; Mr. J. Shannon White, vice-president, and Mr. Ford Howell, secretary, of the Midland Lyceum Bureau of Des Moines, Iowa, in the month of November, 1904, reached the decision to establish a chautauqua circuit in Iowa, and at once began active preparation to launch the new enterprise the next year.

The plan of the Midland managers was to build a circuit program to cover a period of about ten weeks and to sell this program to sub-managers on a margin of \$5.00 per date per town. On a ten day chautauqua, twenty attractions would be delivered at a margin of profit of \$100.00. This plan of operation seemed to have been quite successful during the early years. S. M. Holladay contracted for the entire Midland program for use in a group of towns under his control in Nebraska and Iowa, and there were other sub-managers who would use the same talent in a similar way in South Dakota and other territory, routing the talent to the best advantage possible under that early plan.

## 140 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

In 1906 Mr. White found it advisable to operate a circuit of his own, and later took into partnership Mr. H. H. Freeman. During his early chautauqua experience he also contracted with the Midland circuit management for the use of their program in a group of towns under his own management.

When sufficiently established to enable the managers to exercise a sound control, the Midland circuit operated ten days in each community served. A little later their period was cut down to seven days. They maintained certain educational features on their program. There was always a morning bible hour, an afternoon domestic science hour, and an expert to work with the children. The indifference of the people toward the educational features led to the discontinuance of the same, but the work among the children has been maintained.

The promoters of the Midland circuit were true pioneers in the circuit chautauqua field. They performed a fine piece of constructive work in removing prejudices, demonstrating the practicability of the circuit plan of operation, and overcoming the indifference of the people they sought to serve. They were conscious of having entered a field of great merit and boundless possibilities for development, and heroically and consistently stood by their high

purposes with unwavering determination from the beginning.

In 1909 the Midland Chautauqua Circuit was sold to Mr. S. M. Holladay. Mr. Holladay had been manager for two years prior to this, and was, therefore, fully informed on the state of the business; also wholly in accord with its ideals, aims, and purposes. He came into full possession in 1912.

The Midland management have always maintained the practice of providing substantial programs. William J. Bryan, Rev. Wm. A. Sunday, Frederick Ward, and Booker T. Washington, have all made the Midland circuit. Senator LaFollette was one of their big platform features, as were also Senators Albert B. Cummins and Jonathan P. Dolliver of Iowa.

The practice of selling circuit programs to sub-managers for use over a considerable time later gave way to more complete control from headquarters. In some instances contracts of straight sales were made with local individuals or committees, and sometimes with a single individual who would have charge of all local interests and act as superintendent during the assembly.

As time went on it was found necessary to provide

## 142 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

more fully for local backing and coöperation. Season ticket subscriptions were taken during chautauqua week, for the assembly to be held a year later. And in some instances contracts were made with local citizens binding them to full coöperation in arousing interest in the chautauqua and selling a sufficient number of season tickets to furnish a substantial foundation for success.

The Midland circuit began in 1905 selling practically uniform programs to local managements for assemblies ranging from ten to fourteen days. When they cut the period of duration to seven days it was considered a radical and revolutionary move. But experience had proven that, with the large increase in the number of chautauquas, it was impossible to maintain the interest over a prolonged period, and the last days became more or less of a drag. Furthermore, the adoption of a uniform period of duration made practicable the employment of a more nearly uniform circuit program.

The experience of the Midland folks in trying to establish economical principles of chautauqua operation by cultivating coöperation between managers of local chautauquas, so that Midland might serve them with a high grade uniform program at low cost, was the same as that of other circuit adventur-

ers. It soon became apparent that to avoid expensive and perplexing complications, it would be necessary to establish a circuit of their own, with the total responsibility and management centralized at their headquarters.

From the rather modest beginning in 1905, in which the Midland furnished programs for twenty chautauquas, the business steadily expanded under the sane, yet enterprising, leadership of S. M. Holladay. Once he decided to cut loose from entangling alliances and do business for himself, his efforts at pioneering in progress began to show big results.

When the five-day chautauqua came into vogue, the Midland organized a circuit of that character and conducted it on the same high plane that had characterized the major circuit. These were designed to operate in towns not sufficiently populous to support a more extensive program.

In 1923 the Midland circuit again changed hands. The seven-day circuit was taken over by the Acme Chautauqua Circuit of Des Moines, Iowa. The five-day circuit was combined with the Interstate of Chicago. The three-day circuit was purchased by the Cadmean management of Topeka, Kansas.

For a period of nineteen years the Midland circuit has ministered to the needs of a vast population

## 144 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

in important sections of several mid-western states. Their contribution to learning, reform, coöperative enterprise, and the spirit of progress generally, has been both widespread and splendid. True pioneers in circuit chautauqua management, they remained to the last true to the highest and best ideals, and kept the faith as true servants of their generation.

### FRED W. BARTELL

During 1905 Fred W. Bartell of Siloam Springs, Arkansas, launched the Associated Chautauquas which came to be known as the Bartell Circuit, starting the first year with only five assemblies at Siloam Springs, Pittsburgh, Kansas, Muskogee, Vanita, and Tulsa, Oklahoma, increasing in 1906 to sixteen towns, and reaching his high point in twenty assemblies.

This is another typical case of a man having been inspired to do something worth while in the world through making it possible for large numbers of people to see and hear men and women of distinction and gain inspiration from their messages.

In 1903 Mr. Bartell visited the small chautauqua at Springdale, Arkansas, and had the good fortune to hear Colonel George W. Bain, of Kentucky, deliver his great temperance lecture, "The Safe Side



of Life." Mr. Bartell relates that this lecture made a lasting impression on him and was the thing that determined him to take up chautauqua work as a business. He was at that time operating a large department store at Siloam Springs, Arkansas, but he could not dismiss that lecture by Colonel Bain from his mind, and was more and more impressed with the beneficial influence such a message would exert on the lives of young people. He finally came to the conclusion that if he could be instrumental in bringing men like Colonel Bain to his own town he would be doing something more worth while than operating a department store.

It so befell that in 1904 Evangelist John E. Brown of Neosha, Missouri, had contracted with a Chicago lyceum bureau for chautauqua talent sufficient for two programs, planning to place one at Springfield, Missouri, and the other at Neosha. For some reason he failed to make the proper arrangements at placing the Springfield program and asked Mr. Bartell to take it off his hands. Mr. Bartell had been active in promoting lyceum courses in his town and decided to make the venture. He relates that it was not a very strong program as originally designed, but he was able to strengthen it by the addition of other lecturers and musical attractions,

and was fortunate in securing a date on William Jennings Bryan, whose wonderful drawing power at that time made Bartell's first venture at Siloam Springs a financial success.

Mr. Bartell's experience in handling this chautauqua locally, at Siloam Springs, convinced him that he could not secure the kind of chautauqua attractions necessary to build a really strong program by operating an independent assembly, and as there were no other chautauquas in that section of the country out of which to form a merger, he decided to form a circuit — which decision culminated in the Associated Chautauquas in 1905.

Of course he must have his friend Colonel George W. Bain. He also secured Sam P. Jones, Richmond P. Hobson (two of the best chautauqua attractions of that time) and with the addition of other popular lecturers, musical attractions, and institutional work, built a fairly successful program.

The following year Mr. Bartell operated sixteen assemblies and did most of the work himself in the way of booking the talent, making railroad schedules, placing local season tickets, preparing and distributing advertising, and making settlements. His strong desire to make his circuit program available at a low cost perhaps caused him to overwork

the idea of low overhead cost to his own personal detriment.

Mr. Bartell was a strong believer in lecturers. Col. Geo. W. Bain, Frank Dixon, DeWitt Miller, Geo. R. Stuart, Governor Chas. Brough of Arkansas, Champ Clark, Congressman Landis, Uncle Joe Cannon, and Senator Robt. M. LaFollette all served on the Associated Chautauquas.

For his major program he required the local committee in each town to guarantee the sale of from six hundred to seven hundred and fifty season tickets at \$2.00 each. For the minor program he required the sale of five hundred season tickets. Often, however, in the haste of promotion and lack of time he would put on assemblies without the required number of tickets pledged. These assemblies would invariably show a financial loss.

An unfortunate bank failure in 1910 so crippled the Associated Chautauquas that the work had to be abandoned, but during the five years of his operation Mr. Bartell made for himself a reputation as a chautauqua manager worth while, and his pioneer work made possible the extension of the circuit idea by others throughout the territory into which he had introduced it. He had plans matured for the launching of an organization to continue on a larger scale

## 148 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

when the bank failure previously referred to put an end to his chautauqua plans.

### THE LINCOLN CHAUTAUQUAS

The Lincoln Chautauquas first operated as the Temperance Chautauquas had its beginning in 1906. It was decided by a group of men at Springfield, Illinois, in 1905 to establish a chautauqua circuit with one chautauqua in every county in Illinois.

The primary consideration in this venture was to develop the temperance idea by a systematic set of meetings covering the entire state of Illinois, carried on in a definite way under a single management. The first year of their operation only, they were called the Temperance Chautauquas.

The work of establishing this circuit by the booking of local contracts was actively begun very soon after the idea was conceived, and in the spring of 1906 arrangements were completed. The substantial citizens of every community felt the urgent need of temperance agitation, and the promoters of this enterprise found a welcome in almost every county visited. Mr. Alonzo E. Wilson was the leading spirit in this movement. His burning zeal for prohibition led him to devote himself with all the vigor of his nature to perfecting all plans, and afterwards

gave him a place of national prominence in connection with that great reform.

In 1906 the Temperance Chautauquas delivered programs in one hundred and five towns in the state of Illinois. The outstanding features of the program were educational, dealing with political questions of the day and particularly stressing prohibition. Musical entertainment of high grade was also provided. One unique feature in connection with the Temperance Chautauquas was that the local committees were required to provide entertainment for the talent in every community visited.

In 1907 the name was changed to Lincoln Chautauquas and operated by the National Lincoln Chautauqua System. They finally developed several circuits which operated mainly in Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. For two years they operated circuits in the southern states, and for two years in scattered towns in Missouri, Kansas, and Minnesota.

Alonzo E. Wilson was president and general manager of the Lincoln Chautauquas from the beginning until they ceased operation in 1921. Associated with him in the management in the early years were Loring J. Whiteside, now president of Community Chautauquas of New Haven, Connecti-

cut, and Greencastle, Indiana; Charles W. Meneley of Illinois, and Fred D. Ewell of the Mutual Chautauquas of Chicago.

The programs were in the main of six days' duration, although for one or two seasons in the south they had five- and seven-day circuits. Their business was always conducted on the circuit plan, and the whole transaction was handled from a general headquarters. The long tenure of its operation was due largely to the effort made to serve in a strong way the pressing needs of the times, and the best talent available was used on their programs.

#### WHITE & MYERS

As has been previously stated, Mr. J. Shannon White, whose name is inseparably connected with the White & Myers Chautauqua System, began his chautauqua work in connection with the Midland Lyceum Bureau of Des Moines, Iowa, and was active in the organization of the Midland Chautauqua circuit, which began active operations in 1905. Within a year, however, Mr. White decided to launch into business for himself, and in association with Mr. H. H. Freeman formed a partnership and began operating a circuit of chautauquas under a new management. That partnership continued for

several years, when Mr. Freeman was superseded by Mr. J. S. Myers, who continued with Mr. White until 1920, at which time Mr. Moreland Brown took his place. During all these years the business of this circuit has gradually expanded and, as has been the case with other managements, the experiences of years have tended to eliminate the less desirable features, and something approximating standardization in chautauqua circuit management has been achieved.

The greatest number of assemblies conducted by the White & Myers management during any one year was 362 during the summer of 1920. These were booked on five- and six-day circuits. In the beginning they sold circuit programs outright to local managers, but in 1906 they began the booking of a circuit of towns on a contract which called for a guarantee on the part of each town amounting to \$1,500.00. The tents and advertising material were furnished by the general management, but the towns were required to get out their own program booklets.

Among the attractions that have been used by the White & Myers System might be mentioned Kilties Band, Midland Concert Company, Colonel H. W. J. Ham, Marvin Williams, Frank Gamel, Virginia Jubilee Singers, Capt. R. P. Hobson, Retz-Nehrbas

## 152 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Entertainment Co., Spillman Riggs, Col. G. A. Gearhart, Royal Male Quartette, Dr. Thos. E. Green. These were among the attractions used throughout the early period, and in the years that have followed a consistent effort has been made to build programs abreast of the times and capable of making substantial contributions in popular education and moral power.

### THE REDPATH-HORNER CIRCUIT

In the list of pioneers who braved the difficulties and endured the hardships of early day chautauqua promotion there stands out prominently the name of Charles F. Horner, general manager of Redpath-Horner Chautauquas of Kansas City, Missouri. From his first experience in chautauqua work he felt its strong appeal, and was impelled by the vision of large service to the world to give up his purpose to pursue a legal profession and devote his splendid energies to the development and extension of chautauqua work.

Mr. Horner's first contact with the chautauqua business came in 1904, while he was conducting a real estate business at Lexington, Nebraska. Prior to this time he had been influential in building up lyceum sentiment in his home town, and had met



with splendid success. When, therefore, J. Roy Ellison came to Lexington in the spring of 1904 looking for possible openings for the new circuit, then being promoted by the Standard Chautauqua Bureau, Mr. Horner was the logical man to see and Mr. Horner was seen. The result was an arrangement whereby the whole program of the Standard Bureau should be put on at Lexington as a unit of the regular circuit, and Mr. Horner entered into solemn covenants, together with other prominent citizens of Lexington, to pay a stipulated price for the service to be rendered.

The dream may have vaguely shadowed itself forth at earlier periods, but now it came boldly forth in detailed outline. The experiences of that summer, the coming and going of the talent, the enthusiasm of the people of Lexington over the splendid programs, the many evidences of good being accomplished, the spectacle of a large number of men working together toward one objective, and reaching it in splendid fashion, all contributed in powerful ways to force his mind to a determination to do this thing on a big scale, as a special educational and inspirational service to the people over a wide territory.

But big things are not done in a day. The start

in this case needed to be made in a modest way for obvious reasons. Mr. Horner began by booking lyceum contracts throughout Nebraska, procuring talent through the Redpath Bureau of Chicago. His success was instant and widespread, and he succeeded in introducing the lyceum into scores of western communities that had never attempted anything of the sort before. He had not gone far in this enterprise until he was convinced that it was peculiarly suited to his tastes and temperament, and it was then that he decided to abandon his plan to finish a course of study in the law and devote himself exclusively to the lyceum and chautauqua as furnishing the most natural outlet for his ambitions and capabilities.

In the autumn of 1906 Mr. Horner entered into a contract with Keith Vawter as agent for the promotion of chautauqua west of the Missouri River, for the Redpath Circuit then being arranged for, and calculated to operate in several states. By the spring of the year 1907 he had succeeded in lining up fifteen towns in Nebraska and it was the intention to serve these as a regular part of the Redpath circuit. But when it came to dating them, it was found to be impossible to satisfy local demands on account of overlapping interests between Nebraska

and Iowa towns, and this plan had to be abandoned. It was then decided that these Nebraska towns should be provided with a circuit program all their own, and supplied with chautauqua service fully adapted to local needs. Accordingly, the equipment and necessary paraphernalia were secured, together with a splendid program of talent. Mr. Horner served the major portion of these fifteen towns with one tent outfit, acted as platform superintendent and general overseer, and, with renting a few extra tents for filling in where date demands required it, succeeded in laying the foundations in a substantial way.

This initial season in the West closed with everybody in fine spirits and anxious for further development work. Plans for another advance were at once perfected. All felt that the venture on the prairie had been a marked success.

In February, 1908, the Western Redpath Chautauqua System was incorporated to operate west of the Missouri River. The stockholders were Chas. F. Horner, Keith Vawter, and Robert R. Smith. A booking campaign was forthwith inaugurated with dash and daring. The result was the lining up of sufficient contracts for a complete circuit in Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado.

## 156 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

In those days the plan of promotion chiefly in vogue was to secure subscriptions for season tickets in sufficient number to cover about seventy per cent of the cost, the local boosters to deliver and collect for these tickets a little in advance of the opening dates in the various towns. Owing to the shortness of the time for promotion, and the difficulty of securing men to do the work who were specially equipped for it, it became necessary to open the chautauqua in many of these first year towns with only a fraction of the necessary number of season tickets subscribed.

The writer distinctly recalls having served as a superintendent on the Horner Circuit that summer. At his first town he discovered upon arrival that less than three hundred tickets had been subscribed, while seven hundred was the required number. This meant a big loss unless something could be done. After the tent was erected and the seating all in, the whole force of crew men, numbering six, together with the superintendent, took blocks of season tickets and began a systematic house to house campaign throughout the town. Every dwelling, shop, and store was visited, and a most thorough and appealing effort made to whip matters into workable shape. This resulted finally in the advance sale of

some five hundred tickets and aroused sufficient interest throughout the town to insure a fairly satisfactory attendance at the opening, and this grew daily as the wonderful program unfolded. It is interesting to note here that Warren G. Harding, afterwards elected president of the United States, was one of the features of that program.

The new circuit was a revelation to the West. The pioneer spirit out there readily reasserted itself in a fresh desire to penetrate further, and the best was provided. There at once grew up a most cordial spirit of coöperation that made possible the substantial progress that has been made and has enabled Mr. Horner to retain on his premier circuit practically all of the towns booked on the original venture.

In 1912 Mr. Horner bought out the interest of Keith Vawter, and changed the name of the business to Redpath-Horner Chautauquas. Prior to this time he had booked all the towns in his territory capable of maintaining a seven-day program and had established several lengthy circuits of chautauquas operating for a shorter period of time, for the most part for five days each. These differed from the others chiefly in duration, and were placed in towns ranging from a few hundred to several

## 158 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

thousand population. Later other circuit managers adopted this practice, until finally the number of five-, four- and three-day chautauquas far outnumbered those of seven days duration.

Mr. Horner early surrounded himself with able lieutenants and helpers, and always encouraged the fullest coöperation in devising ways and means for proper progress and development along all lines. He was a pioneer in stimulating local chautauqua sentiment, and the unifying of local interest in worth-while things. As a sample of the results achieved in many places, it might be pointed out that at a given town on his premier circuit the coöperating citizens have provided for their children modern, supervised playgrounds, municipal recreational advantages for both children and adults, a community house, an American Legion community center, a golf course, and a home building association. The same people have stood behind all these enterprises who have stood behind the chautauqua, and must have discovered their ability to do these things by the coöperative principle developed in conducting their chautauqua, by forgetting their differences and working together as one.

And thus, from small beginnings great things

came to pass. One determined man of vision caused thousands to see the prospect. Men and women of letters, statesmen, poets, travelers, entertainers, preachers, teachers, and practical men of affairs brought and delivered their messages of light. Great bands wafted their music on the breezes. Accomplished singers ushered in a new world of song. The drama, refined and glorified, came with its age-long appeal. And what was once thought of as "the great American desert" became the home of popularized refinement and fully responsive to the best thought and the rarest genius available.

The heroic pioneers of civilization invaded this territory, drawn by ox-teams, in canvas-covered wagons. Their children later assembled under the wider spread canvas of the circuit chautauquas to cast out the last aboriginal, and adopt the latest discoveries of culture. We leave it to the reader to estimate how large a part was played by the circuit chautauqua in determining the marvelous progress made within the past few years by the wonderful people of this vast territory.

For some years past the headquarters of the Red-path-Horner System has been located at Kansas City, Missouri, where Mr. Horner conducts his

## 160 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Institute of Fine Arts, and from whence he directs the many collateral interests he has developed along with his great chautauqua circuits.

His contribution to the cultural interests of the Southwest is widely acknowledged and of permanent value. In his nature are to be found a rare combination of artistic genius and business sagacity. The former has enabled him to take an important place as a leader in artistic development, while the latter has served to pilot big ventures through to safety and success. He is an idealist, with the practical sense necessary in making dreams come true, a business man who can write poetry, or charm an audience with the witchery of original conceptions. Time will ascribe to Mr. Horner a high place among those who have helped in dispelling the doubts and fears of the human heart.



## CHAPTER IX

### PERIOD OF VAST EXPANSION

The pioneer circuits, beginning with that operated by Keith Vawter under the name of the Standard Chautauqua Bureau in 1904, had a hard struggle for life. While the desire for knowledge was widespread among the people and the love of entertainment was almost universal, it was the prevailing opinion that chautauqua managements ought to conduct their business without asking too much of the local citizens.

From the beginning, however, it was very apparent that no chautauqua management could hope to succeed without the intelligent and hearty coöperation of a number of the forward-looking citizens in each locality to be visited. Wherever the attempt was made to dispense with this coöperation, severe losses were sustained.

It not infrequently occurred in those early days that the local citizens would put forth considerable effort in the advance campaign for the sale of chautauqua season tickets, and yet fall short in placing the required number. In fairness to the chautauqua

management, who had thoroughly discharged the obligations of the party of the first part, this shortage had to be made up. This was usually accomplished by the local boosters levying an assessment against themselves.

One or two experiences of this kind caused a serious question to arise in the minds of the local boosters, as to whether the people of their community could be interested in sufficient numbers to make the chautauqua venture self-supporting. Oftentimes, at the close of a chautauqua week, it required the most strenuous effort on the part of the superintendent in charge to bring the local underwriters to see that they themselves were really pioneering in a venture that could not fail of substantial results for the people of their community and that, by perseverance, everything could be made to come out right in the end.

It often occurred that the local underwriters would delay starting their advance campaign of season-ticket selling until the chautauqua was almost at hand, and the short time left would not afford sufficient opportunity for making a thorough job of the advance selling. It has always been the contention of the managers that a group of determined

men, in any given community, by putting a sufficient amount of intelligent work into the advance campaign, can make it successful and relieve themselves of the danger of having to make up a deficit.

As soon as the general principles of chautauqua management began to be stabilized, and to take on somewhat the appearance of standardization, additional managers began to appear in the field, and the organization of new circuits and the consequent extension of the chautauqua soon became widespread.

As early as 1908 Mr. Russell Bridges, at that time manager of the Alkahest Lyceum Bureau, with headquarters at Atlanta, Georgia, organized and put into operation a string of chautauquas in the far South under the name of the Alkahest Chautauqua Circuit.

Mr. Bridges encountered the same difficulties as had been experienced by the pioneers farther north, and was only able to induce fourteen communities to coöperate in this plan the first year. However, the programs delivered were enthusiastically received, and Mr. Bridges was encouraged to increase the scope of his operations as rapidly as the state of the business would permit.

## 164 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

By gradual stages the Alkahest circuit was lengthened, until in the year 1913 there were sixty-five towns visited.

But it appears that Mr. Bridges did not pursue his chautauqua work with the same enthusiasm that had been manifested by him in the management and control of the Alkahest Lyceum Bureau, and by 1916 it was deemed advisable to sell the Alkahest circuit. It was taken over by the Lincoln Chautauquas, which institution had by that time expanded its business far beyond the territory of Illinois, which was chosen for its original operation.

In the year 1910 Mr. C. Durant Jones of Perry, Iowa, organized a circuit of Temperance Chautauquas in Iowa for the propagation of prohibition sentiment. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the Anti-Saloon League, and other temperance organizations willingly loaned their support, and these temperance meetings were held in thirty-nine of the smaller towns throughout the state of Iowa.

Later Mr. Jones abandoned the temperance idea and began the operation of the Jones Circuit, still operating chiefly in small towns, and sometimes in mere villages. From the beginning, Mr. Jones had

for his hobby the idea of low cost, and with this end in view he would place on his program the same speaker for both afternoon and evening. This same practice was carried through the six days of the Jones assemblies.

By 1915 the Jones Chautauqua Circuit had broken over the borders of Iowa and extended to surrounding states, visiting three hundred towns during that summer. One of his circuits operated for six days at each point, and others a lesser number. It was the practice to fit the duration of the chautauqua to the patronage possibilities of the community visited.

Up to the year 1921, Mr. Jones was sole owner and manager of this business. At the time of the great stringency in the money market, and a great falling off of business of every kind and character, he found it advisable to make some radical changes, and so proceeded to incorporate under the name "The Jones Chautauqua System," of which he is president.

In 1915 Mr. Jones organized the Interstate Chautauqua Company, of Des Moines, Iowa, which, as the name would indicate, was intended to widen the scope of operations. This company had hardly

struck its full stride when the war came on and so crippled its business that it was removed to Perry and operated by the Jones management there.

In 1922 Mr. Jones went to Hastings, Nebraska, and organized the Western Chautauqua Company, with an officary of local citizens, and himself as treasurer. This company conducted tent chautauquas of three days duration, with Mr. Jones appearing as one of the lecturers.

In 1911 there sprung up the Travers-Wick Chautauqua Management, which name was afterwards changed to the Travers-Newton Company. Mr. Travers had been associated with the management of the Jones System, while Mr. Wick had appeared extensively on his programs as manager of a musical organization. During the year of 1911 this management conducted chautauquas in twenty-seven towns, all within the state of Iowa. The next year additional promotion was accomplished and the business grew steadily until the year 1919, when the Travers-Newton Company managed chautauquas in five hundred and thirty-one towns.

One circuit was of seven days duration, others of five days, and one of three days.

This management adopted from the beginning the established practice of locating chautauquas on a

season ticket guarantee, requiring coöperation by local citizens in the advance sale. The Travers-Newton Company provide talent, tents, advertising, and all necessary equipment. They maintain their connection with local committees by the use of a circuit manager for each circuit operated.

The year 1912 saw the entrance into the circuit chautauqua field of Harry P. Harrison, manager of the Chicago department of the Redpath Lyceum Bureau. Just why Mr. Harrison, who had long been a prominent factor in the lyceum field, should have delayed so long his entrance into the chautauqua business has never been made quite clear. But when he did, at length, take up the work he manifested the characteristic zeal and enterprise that had given him his high standing in lyceum circles.

Mr. Harrison's first contact with the business occurred in 1901 while he was a student at Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa. He entered into contract with Keith Vawter, then manager of the Standard Lyceum Bureau of Des Moines, Iowa, and began work as a lyceum booking agent during the vacation period.

By dint of hard work and steady application, Mr. Harrison made his way through Cornell College by this means, and later through two years of law

## 168 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

study at the University of Chicago. These five years of strenuous work and selling experience furnished the foundation for the larger developments of the following years.

In 1904 Mr. Harrison served as a chautauqua superintendent on Keith Vawter's pioneer circuit. He relates that he helped put up the tent, although he had never seen one before that day, and at Bedford, Iowa, built a two-board sidewalk from the town to the fair grounds to enable the chautauqua patrons to escape the sea of mud occasioned by the torrential rains that overtook the chautauqua there. Mr. Harrison states that the experiences of this first season made a lasting impression upon his mind, and that, from that time on, he had as one of his pet dreams the organization of a chautauqua circuit of his own.

Mr. Harrison had gone to Columbus, Ohio, in the spring of 1904 and established there a branch of the Redpath Lyceum Bureau. He spent three years as manager of the lyceum business in Ohio. He then removed to Chicago, since which time he has been the manager of the Chicago Department of the Redpath Lyceum Bureau.

In 1912 he launched his first chautauqua circuit, booking thirty-nine towns. This circuit opened at



Pulaski, Tennessee, on the 15th day of June, 1912, and meandered through the states of Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, and Michigan. His first season was so short that by beginning early he was able to use the talent he had employed on many of the independent chautauqua programs later.

The next year Mr. Harrison added many towns to his major circuit, and in 1914 organized his first five-day circuit. He has increased his business from year to year, and with the addition of fifty-eight towns purchased from the Coit-Alber management, will conduct in 1923 four hundred and forty assemblies. His territory stretches from Florida to Canada, and affords a most picturesque and interesting summer's travel for everybody connected with the business.

In 1915 Mr. Harrison presented the grand opera star, Alice Neilson, on his major circuit. She made the entire trip in a private car, and represented a new and unique venture in building circuit chautauqua programs. In 1916 he used Julia Claussen, another grand opera singer, as his premier musical attraction. So far as we have been able to determine, no other manager has attempted anything quite so pretentious along musical lines.

Mr. Harrison used the LeBrun Grand Opera

## 170 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Company on his first circuit program of 1912, and has been one of the leading exponents of high grade musical and dramatic attractions throughout the years; and while employing the ablest lecture talent available, he has popularized his programs with Shakespearean productions by the use of the Ben Greet Players, and the introduction of high grade dramatic productions.

He has given special attention to the work of story telling among the children, and by the use of a specially organized department, has been able to secure professional leaders along this important line of work. So much interest has been aroused that repeated calls are made for assistance in securing story tellers for local use. During the past twelve years about thirty-five trained young women story tellers have been placed through this management as teachers of story telling in colleges, libraries, and schools throughout the South.

Mr. Harrison has established his chautauqua circuits on substantial foundations, giving large prospects of permanent success. He has consistently avoided the spectacular and trashy, and has uniformly provided for his patrons a program of real merit. Upon this foundation he enjoys the confi-

dence and fullest coöperation of the best people throughout the territory of his operations.

In 1912 Mr. Paul M. Pearson, a veteran lyceum and chautauqua lecturer, organized and placed in operation the Swarthmore Chautauqua Association, with headquarters at Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Dr. Pearson's first experience and connection with the chautauqua dates back to the summer of 1895, when he attended chautauqua at Palmer Lake, Colorado, and at Winona Lake, Indiana, appearing upon the programs at these two points in literary recitals. Being an instructor in the art of public speaking, he naturally became much interested in the work the early chautauquas were doing, and it soon developed that his services were in demand in all parts of the country. During the next ten years he appeared on many platforms in literary recitals, visiting Ashland, Kentucky; Canton, South Dakota; Clinton, Missouri; Moundsville, West Virginia; Bayview, Michigan; Mountain Lake, Maryland; Lexington, Kentucky; Tama, Iowa; Northampton, Massachusetts; Monteagle, Tennessee; Old Salem, Illinois; Bristol, Tennessee, and many others.

Practically all these engagements were from two to six days in a town.

## 172 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Dr. Pearson has been highly connected with both chautauqua and lyceum activities, and during many years was editor of *Talent*, a magazine devoted to the interest of the platform. His able service in this line of work, and the contribution he made toward moulding public sentiment in behalf of the lyceum and chautauqua movements, are universally recognized.

Dr. Pearson has introduced a new note in chautauqua management. From the first he had maintained that its work should be distinctive for its educational characteristics and methods, and, true to this ideal, he has steadfastly adhered to this principle. It has been his special care to see to it that nothing appears upon the platforms of the Swarthmore Chautauquas that does not, either directly or indirectly, make a substantial contribution to the cause of education.

Another prominent tone of the new note he introduced is the adoption of the principle of non-profit coöperation. The business is controlled by a board of managers, including the names of some of the most substantial and responsible business men of Philadelphia. These men stand responsible for maintaining the educational character of the insti-

tution, and provide a background and bulwark of inestimable value and power.

The Swarthmore Chautauquas visited forty-one towns in 1912 in the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. From the very first this service was received with enthusiasm. Dr. Pearson took upon himself the responsibility of establishing proper relations with the leading citizens of the communities visited, and built and developed programs of such character as would be certain to make the strongest appeal possible to the substantial forward-looking men and women of the territory.

Year by year many towns have been added to the Swarthmore Association. One circuit is operated on a seven-day schedule, other circuits on five-day schedules. An extensive list of winter festivals is also conducted by this management. These are three days in length.

The greatest number of chautauquas conducted by this association is eight hundred and seventy-six for the year 1923, which list includes forty towns acquired from the Coit-Alber circuit management.

Mr. Pearson is a firm believer in the value of the drama as a means of combining entertainment with instruction, and has thoroughly established the prac-

## 174 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

tice of incorporating in his programs high grade productions best suited to the chautauqua field. His musical attractions, lecturers, and workers in the juvenile department are all selected with uniform care, with the idea of delivering the best that is to be procured in every line of chautauqua activity.

The Standard Chautauqua System of Lincoln, Nebraska, C. O. Bruce, president, is the successor to the Britt Lyceum and Chautauqua management formerly located at Lincoln, Nebraska.

They began the operation of their first chautauqua circuit in 1913, serving thirty-seven towns.

Like other circuits, year by year additional towns were organized, and in 1923 the Standard System operates within the states of South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, Kansas, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and Oklahoma. The system reached its climax in number of towns served in the year 1920, when chautauquas were delivered in four hundred and fifteen communities. Sixty-nine of these assemblies were of six days duration each, two hundred and seventy-one of five days each, seventy-one of three days each, and four of ten days each.

Mr. C. O. Bruce, president and general manager

of the Standard Chautauqua System, had for many years been very active in church and civic affairs, and was very naturally drawn into the chautauqua field by the prospect of large service to humanity. He has associated with him Ernest Bruce, secretary, and J. M. Crofton, treasurer. These three men uniformly express great faith in the value of the work they are doing and are strong in the conviction that the chautauqua has a prominent place and an important service to render in the affairs of every well regulated community.

In the year 1913 Mr. J. Roy Ellison reëntered the chautauqua field on a rather pretentious scale by the organization of a chautauqua circuit known as The Ellison-White Chautauqua Association. They chose for their field the western section of the United States.

This was the same J. Roy Ellison who had done some real pioneering in circuit chautauqua work in connection with Keith Vawter in 1903 and 1904. During the intervening years he had busied himself chiefly in lyceum work, and during the summer months served as superintendent on the seven-day circuit of the Redpath Vawter Chautauqua System. He was always given credit for being a thorough-going chautauqua enthusiast, and every town

thought itself fortunate when it became known that Mr. Ellison was to act as superintendent there. Ever since his earliest experience with Mr. Vawter he had dreamed and planned for a circuit of his own, and by 1913 he believed the opportunity had arrived.

This was the first attempt to book chautauquas in sparsely settled territory. The towns large enough to support such an institution were necessarily far apart. Railroad transportation was expensive in the mountain districts, and many fears were expressed by Mr. Ellison's friends that, on account of the long jumps between towns, he would find it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to realize revenues from the business sufficient to meet the extraordinary expense.

But Ellison's well known enthusiasm impelled him to the effort, and no one will now question but that the venture has been fully justified by the results achieved.

Mr. Ellison and Mr. White threw themselves with enthusiasm into the promotion of this western circuit, and succeeded in closing contracts in forty-two towns in the states of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. The first circuit opened at Lodi, California, on June 16, 1913.



Each year additional towns were added to this pioneer western circuit, until in 1920 one thousand and fourteen communities were visited. By this time a variety of circuits had been organized, some operated seven days, some six, some five, and some four.

In 1916 J. M. Erickson, who had previously organized the Rocky Mountain Sixes for the Ellison-White Association, began advocating the idea of invading Canada and Alaska. The notion found support in the minds of both Ellison and White, and in the fall of that year Mr. Erickson crossed the line and organized the first circuit in western Canada. Calgary was chosen for the location of the new headquarters.

This promotion was quite successful the first year, and although it was in the midst of the world war period, the Canadians showed a decided interest in the new venture. Forty-two towns were served with chautauqua programs during the summer of 1917, and in the autumn of the same year the same management visited one hundred and ten towns with what they called the Fall Chautauqua Festivals. Mr. Erickson says that although it was war time, money was plentiful, as wheat and beef were bringing record prices. In practically every town the

## 178 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

venture paid out and in only a very few were there deficits to be made up.

The second year in Canada found the people in a rather despondent frame of mind over the possibility of the Allies suffering defeat at the hands of the Germans, and, although money was still plentiful, there was a decided falling off in chautauqua receipts. Yet the season was voted a fair success.

In the fall of 1918 the influenza epidemic struck Canada and practically all of the Fall Festival dates had to be cancelled. About two hundred people, who were to appear on the programs, had to be transported home from western Canada. Some of these were from Australia, some from New Zealand, some from England, and others from the United States. Under the contract with talent, the chautauqua management was obliged to pay the transportation charges for returning these people to their homes, and this, with the almost total loss of the season's business by cancellation, left the Dominion Chautauquas heavily in debt.

In spite of these discouragements, however, the work went on. Mr. Erickson reports that the year 1919 was fairly successful. In 1920 they added a second circuit, and in 1921 still another.

The extension of these circuits into Alaska was a

heroic venture. The manager says they have been splendid successes in every way except financially. The people everywhere have shown the keenest interest and have willingly rendered the heartiest coöperation.

The manager of the Dominion Chautauquas has for his greatest problem the meeting of the tremendous transportation costs. The population is scattered. The distances between towns is great. The population of the four western provinces of Canada, and of Alaska, is only a little over two million people, and the territory covered by these circuits is considerably more than two-thirds as large as the whole territory of the United States.

Another unique venture made by the Ellison-White Association was made in New Zealand and Australia, in both of which countries they have conducted circuits as genuine pioneers.

The response of the people has been hearty, and the managers express themselves of the opinion, that, within a short time, ways and means will be worked out whereby sufficient revenues can be realized to make these circuits on the other side of the world self-supporting.

The distance to New Zealand is about 6,800 miles, and to Australia is 1,200 miles more.

## 180 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

The first chautauqua was taken to Australia in 1918. Sixty towns were booked from Queensland into Victoria, a distance greater than from San Francisco to Chicago. From there the talent went to New Zealand, where fourteen chautauquas were held with remarkable success. The next two years Australia was abandoned and a circuit conducted in New Zealand only. In 1921 Australia was again invaded and a regular Association formed. A small number of chautauquas were conducted in Australia in 1921 and 1922.

After considerable experimentation, the management decided to confine its Australian efforts to a select section of Victoria, and a few towns in Tasmania. The newspapers have warmed up to the enterprise and the people generally are showing less reserve. The people of that country are sadly lacking in community spirit and pride, and the managers believe that, as rapidly as these handicaps can be overcome, the chautauqua will come into its own. Altogether it is a great pioneer venture, worthy of the highest commendation.

Crawford A. Pepper, manager of the New York office of the Redpath Lyceum Bureau, watching the rise of the circuit plan in other parts of the country, approached Keith Vawter, whose pioneering and

success in the West had attracted much attention, to join him in promoting a circuit in the New England states. Mr. Vawter was not, at the first, strongly attracted to the proposition, but later sent an experienced man to make a sort of preliminary survey, and later agreed to make the venture.

In the autumn of 1912 he sent George S. Dalgety, who had served on his system as a lecturer, and bore unmistakable evidences of managerial ability, to start the work of booking the towns. Later, after a successful beginning had been made, he sent four experienced booking representatives in the person of Julius H. Rohde, F. A. Wildman, O. E. Behymer, and C. C. Collett, who succeeded in securing sufficient contracts to establish a circuit. The business was incorporated with the stock held by C. A. Pfeffer, Keith Vawter, and George S. Dalgety. Mr. Vawter loaned his valued services and placed his personality, with all his chautauqua experience, solidly behind the new venture.

It was a success from the beginning, much to the surprise of other managers who were watching the project with interest. The Yankees welcomed the innovation with open arms, and gave it splendid appreciation and support. After the foundations were securely laid and a gait established for the new

## 182 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

circuit, Mr. Vawter gradually withdrew from active participation in its business affairs and Mr. Peffer assumed full management.

The Redpath Chautauquas of New York and New England opened in Western New York state about the middle of June 1913 and swept through Western, Central, and Northern New York, into Vermont, and New Hampshire, and closed in the state of Maine during the early part of September.

Mr. Peffer has employed the services of the ablest lecturers, musicians, and entertainers. In 1910 he made a contract with Mr. Ben Greet for the appearance of his famous players on lyceum courses. This tour was followed by the appearance of this company for several successful seasons on various Redpath chautauqua circuits.

In 1914 Mr. Peffer established a producing department. In this office each year some fifteen plays and light operas are produced with complete professional casts, and of these Mr. Peffer has made large use on his chautauqua circuit.

After the territory had been proven, other managements invaded New York and New England, but Mr. Peffer's circuit continues strongly entrenched in the affections of the people served, and in this

year of 1923 has every appearance of a matured and close-fibered institution with fine prospects for continued usefulness for many years to come.

The year 1914 saw the organization of three chautauqua circuits destined to wield an important influence in the territory served. These were the Central Community Chautauqua System in Indiana, the Redpath Chautauquas of Columbus, Ohio, and the Coit-Alber Chautauqua Circuit of Cleveland, Ohio.

The Central Community Chautauqua System was organized by S. Eugene Whiteside, and was calculated to serve the territory of Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Kentucky, and Wisconsin. In 1915 the same parties organized the Community Chautauquas of New Haven, Connecticut.

The greatest number of assemblies conducted by these coöperating managers was six hundred and fifty towns in the year 1921. Four hundred of these were of five days duration, and two hundred and fifty of three days duration.

The Community Chautauquas have shown evidences of able management, and both E. Kenneth Whiteside and Harry Z. Freeman, at the helm in 1923, express themselves as firmly in the belief that

## 184 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

the chautauqua movement will continue to grow with the years and develop into a yet more helpful influence in the progress of civilization.

The Redpath Chautauquas of Columbus, Ohio, was organized by W. Vernon Harrison, who continues as manager, with J. A. Bumstead, George G. Whitehead, and D. L. Cornet as managers of circuits.

This company operated its first year, 1914, in fifty towns in Ohio and West Virginia. Gradually other towns have been added to the circuit, and in 1923 one hundred and sixty-five communities will be served. Seventy-five towns enjoy a seven-day program and ninety towns a five-day program.

The grand opera star, Alice Neilson, has made this circuit, also Harvey W. Wiley, the food expert, the Ben Greet Players, and the late Frank W. Gunsaulus. The programs have been uniformly inspiring and constructive.

The Coit-Alber Circuit was organized in 1914 to operate in the territory of Ohio and surrounding states.

The management has brought two circuits into existence operating in western Pennsylvania, Indiana, Michigan, and two circuits in the Province of Ontario, Canada. One seven-day circuit and one



five-day circuit were organized for operation in the States, while in Canada there was a six-day circuit and a four-day circuit. The largest number of towns served in any one year was two hundred and thirty-five in 1921.

Louis J. Alber and Arthur C. Coit were the moving spirits in the organization and operation of these circuits, and like other managers of the best grade, gave special care to the selection of talent. Most of the established lecturers have appeared on their programs, together with Creatore and his Band, the San Carlo Grand Opera Company, and other high grade musical organizations.

In the winter of 1922, this circuit was sold, a part of its holdings going to the Swarthmore Chautauqua Association and a part to the Redpath Systems operated by Harry P. and W. Vernon Harrison of Chicago and Columbus respectively.

The Mutual Chautauqua System came into being in 1916. Frank A. Morgan had, prior to this time, been the active head and manager of the Mutual Lyceum Bureau. In 1909 this bureau had been merged with the Chicago bureau and re-named the Chicago Mutual. At the end of a year this was dissolved, and Mr. Morgan resumed the name of Mutual Lyceum Bureau, which business was after-

## 186 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

wards (in 1916) incorporated as the Mutual Lyceum and Chautauqua System.

Fred D. Ewell and M. H. Wright each secured a one-third interest in this business in the fall of 1915, when all arrangements were made for launching the chautauqua circuit. Mr. Ewell and Mr. Wright had charge of booking the chautauqua business. At the end of a year and a half Mr. Ewell and Mr. Morgan bought the interest of Mr. Wright and these two continued in partnership until the autumn of 1920, when they dissolved partnership, dividing the business in half. Mr. Ewell continued business under the name of the Mutual-Ewell Bureau and Mr. Morgan under the name of the Mutual-Morgan Bureau.

Mr. Morgan conducted three circuits during the summer of 1922. Two of these were five-day circuits and one a four-day circuit; and the total number of towns visited was two hundred and twenty.

This represents the development of this circuit from seventy towns in 1916. The territory is Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio.

Mr. Morgan has used ex-President Taft for a number of dates on his circuit, also Judge Kenasaw Mountain Landis, together with other standard lyceum and chautauqua attractions.

Mr. Fred D. Ewell, proprietor of the Mutual-Ewell Bureau, began active participation in chautauqua work in 1912. During that year, in association with Alonzo E. Wilson and Loring J. Whiteside, the Lincoln Temperance Chautauquas were taken over and incorporated as the National Lincoln Chautauqua System. He resigned as secretary of this organization and joined with Frank A. Morgan in the establishing of the Mutual Lyceum and Chautauqua System.

In 1920, as previously stated, this partnership was dissolved and the territory north and west of the city of Chicago fell to Mr. Ewell, in which to operate his own circuit of chautauquas under the name Mutual-Ewell Bureau.

In 1914 Mr. W. L. Radcliffe appeared upon the scene with seventy-seven towns organized into the Radcliffe Chautauqua System of Washington, D. C.

While adopting the general policies of chautauqua management that had become more or less standardized by this time, Mr. Radcliffe introduced two new features. One of these was to remove the limit as to territory to be served. The other was the building of chautauqua programs around a central controlling idea. A possible third innovation was

## 188 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

limiting the duration of his chautauquas to three days.

This singular and unique arrangement proved to be a success from the beginning, and so rapid was the growth and promotion that the next year (1915) the Radcliffe System visited four hundred and fourteen towns. The numbers increased during the next five years, and, in 1920, the Radcliffe System included one thousand four hundred and twenty-one towns, scattered through forty-four states of the Union.

Mr. Radcliffe calls his three day program "The Ford car of the Chautauquas," carrying its message to the small towns from the Atlantic to the Pacific. His special claims are for quantity production, concentration of program, unified themes, and exchange of talent on a large scale, making possible moderate costs.

As a unique feature in general management, Mr. Radcliffe adopts a general theme for a summer program, and requires all lecturers, entertainers, and others who appear upon his platform to conform to that general theme. His object is an organized educational program, with a single high aim revealing itself in all the co-related subjects discussed on a given program.

While it will be held by some managers that such a policy as that pursued by Mr. Radcliffe fails to supply the variety necessary for the popularizing of outdoor programs, he himself urges that the impact of a unified program of lectures never fails to make a decided impression upon the community.

The Cadmean System of Topeka, Kansas, first began business for the operation of winter chautauquas in the fall of 1913. After that a lyceum business was begun, and operated for several seasons before a summer circuit of chautauquas was undertaken.

The first summer chautauqua circuit was operated in 1918, with a list of ninety-three towns. The next year one hundred and nineteen towns were served, and continued additions were constantly made until in 1921 five hundred and seventy-two towns were visited. This number fell off in 1922 to four hundred and eighty-two.

This business was incorporated in 1922 under the name of Cadmean Lyceum and Chautauqua Association, and the business now extends from the Allegheny Mountains to the Pacific Coast. They have some chautauqua business as far south as the Rio Grande Valley, and as far north as Northern Minnesota.

## 190 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Mr. C. Benjamin Franklin and E. W. Carson have been the moving spirits from the beginning. Mr. Franklin is president and Mr. Carson general manager.

Mr. Ralph W. Squires is now in charge of an office in Chicago which handles all the Cadmean business east of the Mississippi River. Mr. H. J. Bamford is manager of the West Coast circuit, and Miss Madison Klick is manager of the Sun Flower circuit, which operates one hundred and eighty towns beginning in early April and running to October.

During the World War all of the officers and managers of the Cadmean System were in military service. Mr. Franklin was gone from his business for a period of eighteen months. His sister, Miss Meriam Franklin, was left in charge during the latter part of 1918 and the beginning of 1919, and managed to hold the business together until the men returned from the field.

James L. Loar, general manager of the Independent Coöperative Chautauquas, as has been told elsewhere, began his chautauqua career in association with James S. Shaw of Bloomington, Illinois. As state president of the Epworth League for Illinois, he came in with Mr. Shaw when Bloomington

Chautauqua was made the state assembly of the League. After some years of association with Mr. Shaw, he retired from his connection with the Co-operative Chautauquas, and began the organization of what he chose to call The Independent Coöperative Chautauquas, with headquarters at Bloomington.

The distinctive feature of Mr. Loar's activities is a kind of wholesale chautauqua service, which he offers to independent associations with a view to reducing costs and increasing coöperation. He has assisted in some instances in cleaning up old and aggravating debts, and, with the slate washed clean, has enabled the local organizations to start in afresh with new hopes and determination. Within two years he had succeeded in lining up a sufficient number of independent assemblies to enable him to test the practicability of his idea, and was satisfied with the showing made. He was successful in selling to locally managed assemblies his coöperative idea, which provided for them the largest possible measure of independence compatible with the principle of central management. The essential and apparent need everywhere was such reductions in cost — without too great sacrifice of program — as would permit the assemblies to continue the work for which the

## 192 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

foundations had long been laid. A vexing problem of finance had developed, and Mr. Loar offered a coöperative plan that would have been indignantly spurned in the earlier days of great crowds and plentiful resources. In many instances the length of the assembly has been materially reduced to balance costs with the patronage possibilities of the community.

The problem of dates is met by regional grouping of assemblies around some one that has an established custom on dates that cannot well be interfered with. The others in the group are usually less driven by precedent, as to dates, and yield to the routing that enables them to share the coöperative service thus made available. In 1923 the Independent Coöperative Chautauquas are operated in one hundred and twenty-seven towns in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Missouri, with a routing that, for compactness and economical travel, is a decided improvement over the wasteful and exhausting railroad jumps of the earlier independent days.

Beginning with five assemblies in 1903, he has gradually increased his operations, and has succeeded in reviving to vitality and renewed functioning many independent chautauquas that otherwise might



have passed out for all time. He has demonstrated the value of coöperation in a field where it was little known, and has again made clear the imperative need of uniformity in programs and purpose if the chautauqua is to live and continue to serve the people.

In 1922 Mr. Loar took over the International Circuit, and the same year promoted the Interurban Circuit calculated to operate through those sections of Illinois and Indiana served by interurban lines. These circuits are both operated under the name of The International Chautauqua System from the general headquarters in Bloomington, Illinois.

In the period following the world war, and at a time while business inflation was nearing its peak, the Acme Chautauqua System was organized. W. S. Rupe and G. S. Chance teamed in the enterprise and got into operation in 1919 with a circuit of sixty-seven towns. By the autumn of 1921 they had extended their system to include two hundred and seventy-eight, and in 1922 delivered four-day chautauquas throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin, Missouri, and Arkansas.

Later Mr. Chance set up an eastern headquarters in Toledo, Ohio. That business is conducted under

## 194 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

the name of Toledo Acme Chautauqua System, while the western business bears the name Des Moines Acme Chautauqua System.

In 1922 the Des Moines management bought the seven-day circuit of the Midland Chautauquas, thus materially increasing the scope of their operations. Mr. W. S. Rupe is manager. The Acme System has adopted the established principles of circuit management, and Mr. Rupe has great faith in the future of chautauqua, provided satisfactory relations can be maintained with local business and professional interests.

## CHAPTER X

### SOME EARLY DAY PROBLEMS

It was to be expected that the promoters of the early day circuits would encounter many difficulties when they came to put their ideas to practical use. No venture of a similar character had ever been made, and there were no precedents for their guidance.

Movable attractions, catering to the general public up to that time, were mostly of the circus type, playing one-day stands. The popular character of their programs obviated any necessity for local coöperation. It was simply a case of proper distribution of advertising material, securing a town license, and going ahead on their own responsibility. It was set up the outfit in the morning, take it down and load it at night, and arrive by train at the next point the following morning. All attractions traveled on the show train and the whole transaction was so systematized and simplified as to afford no real vexing problems.

On the chautauqua circuit all this was changed. Numerous chautauquas were conducted simultan-

ously. The talent was compelled to zig-zag and criss-cross from point to point, and the overlapping and interlocking interests of the various outfits presented a problem demanding the most careful analysis and sound judgment.

An interesting phase of circuit chautauqua development was the handling of physical equipment and the talent on the road. The orderly and smooth process in vogue today is the result of a gradual evolution from a rather crude system adopted when the circuit venture was first launched. The experience gained has enabled the manager materially to reduce costs, increase efficiency, and bring out of the hurryscurry of early practices an orderly and well-conditioned system of doing things.

We will speak here particularly of practices adopted by the Redpath Vawter Chautauqua System in 1907, by which time this management had broken away entirely from further thought of coöperating with independent assemblies and had attained full stride as an independent business organization. Mr. Vawter having been the pioneer in circuit management, we will mention some practices on the system he evolved as being fairly typical of the early practice on all similar circuits.

With the opening of the season of 1907 the plan

used by Mr. Vawter provided for operating in the circuit towns by groups of three. In other words, the first three towns on the circuit opened simultaneously on Tuesday and continued for six days each, closing on Sunday night. At the Independent chautauquas the practice of using musical attractions through a number of days had been well established and it was but natural that this should have influenced the practice of circuit managers. Mr. Vawter chose, however, not to use any musical attraction for more than two days at any one point, and had secured three companies for his six-day programs. These were the Hesperian Male Quartette, a Hungarian Orchestra, and the Sterling Jubilee Singers. The quartette opened the program at one point, the Hungarian orchestra at another, and the Jubilee singers at still another, but all opened on the same day and remained for two days. On the night of the second day they shifted; and on the night of the fourth day they moved again; each attraction thus making the rounds of the three towns of the first group. This process continued throughout the season. The lecturers, The Right Reverend J. Henry Tihen, Judge Ben B. Lindsey, Monroe E. Markley, J. Adam Bede, Dr. Peter MacQueen, and Governor E. W. Hoch made the rounds of each

group, and during the time intervening before the next group would require their services, made dates at Independent chautauquas. For the most part Governor Hoch would make his group of towns in three days and drop back to Kansas to discharge his duties as governor for the balance of the week. W. Robert Goss, with an illustrated lecture, and George E. Garretson, a juggler, also appeared on this program.

Monday, throughout the season, was reserved for moving day. The crew men would take down the tents and outfit and load them into cars leased from the Arms Palace Horse Car Company. These were attached to the passenger train on which the last day talent made its move to the next town, and made the journey in good time for the set up to be made for opening the next day.

Under this plan of operation there could be no set system of moving equipment, except that the routing was determined by the service the railroads afforded. Each car and set of talent were sent out to the town nearest the one at which they had finished the concluding program. This method of moving equipment continued through 1908 and 1909.

With the idea of publicity always in mind, and

there being great need that a new venture be thoroughly announced, huge banners had been procured bearing the legend "Redpath Vawter Chautauquas," and these were posted broad-side on the cars, thus giving a rather loud hint of what was going on to all the curious along the right-of-way.

As these cars of equipment were moved on Monday, it sometimes occurred that they would become bunched at junction points. Where such a thing occurred the talent and crews would hold a veritable jubilee. They were all away from their homes, thrown every day among crowds of strange people, and when a chance meeting, such as is here referred to, offered the opportunity they were not slow to embrace the chance to renew friendships, exchange experiences, sing and talk and walk together to their hearts' content.

On one occasion on Mr. Vawter's 1908 circuit, moving day arrived for crews and talent from Montezuma, Winfield, Hedrick, Seymour, Mt. Pleasant, and Ottumwa. During that season six assemblies were in simultaneous operation. A special train crew pulled the car of equipment from Winfield west, on the Iowa Central, and picked up a similar car, crew, and set of talent at Hedrick, bound for Oskaloosa, from which point the trip continued

southward. For some reason the railroad company had overlooked furnishing a coach for the accommodation of the passengers on this special. Some practical person suggested adding a box car to the train, and as several were standing idle on a passing track, one of these was switched in and the crews and sets of talent climbed over an improvised platform into a side door of this grain car, and thus made the trip, bumping over low joints the twenty-five mile stretch from Hedrick to Oskaloosa. They were quite crowded together and there were, of course, no windows and only a side door. To add to the embarrassment of the situation there were ten Pueblo Indians comprising part of the talent. Some of the more timid white passengers got to speculating as to what might occur if the Indians should go on the "war path" while they were all thus entrapped in a box car rattling along over a railroad track.

But they made the journey safely, even though they were obliged to stand during the whole twenty-five mile trip, and at Oskaloosa their train picked up the car and outfit from Montezuma and proceeded south to Maxon, where the Iowa Central Railroad crosses the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy. Here the cars and talent from Mt. Pleasant and Ottumwa awaited them, and when these were



switched into the train there were five chautauqua cars strung together, all adorned with flaming streamers along the sides, presenting a spectacle that must have impressed onlookers with the idea that the circuit chautauquas were going to take the country by storm.

This train proceeded west on the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy tracks. One outfit was set out at Chariton, another at Osceola, two outfits were shipped south from Osceola, one going to Mt. Ayr, Iowa, and the other to Grant City, Missouri. One proceeded west from Osceola to Creston, and thence north on a branch line to Greenfield. And so the happy reunion of crew boys and talent folks was broken up, and during the entire season they never again enjoyed a like experience to the extent of five outfits coming together at any point.

As has been suggested, the talent folks flew back and forth by zig-zagging courses from town to town in the six-day group in vogue in 1908. They made what is termed "one day stands" everywhere, thus affording a complete change of program at every point each day.

Several nationally known people took part in this program in 1908. Warren G. Harding, who afterwards became president of the United States, got his

## 202 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

first circuit chautauqua experience on Mr. Vawter's circuit that year. Richmond P. Hobson, the famous naval constructor, Opie Read, the humorous philosopher, and Ernest Harold Baynes, a noted field naturalist, were also on this program.

The practices of 1907 and 1908, of all outfits moving on the same day and allowing but one day for the transfer, was thought to be an exceedingly strenuous one. But the plan adopted for 1909 was considerably more so. The practice of having one open unproductive day out of each seven occasioned a considerable economic loss, and in 1909 Mr. Vawter put into practice the plan of operating seven days in each town, beginning at seven points each Monday and closing Sunday nights.

For this plan of operation the routing was so made up that the same outfit of crew, physical equipment, and talent could close a chautauqua in one town on a given night and open another with the same crew, equipment, and talent the following afternoon. This necessitated the most hurried tear-down on the closing night, speedily loading into the Arms Palace horse car, getting out on the first passenger train, and the most hurried set-up possible at the next town. In a few instances the transportation facilities were not adequate, and the open-

ing afternoon program would have to be eliminated, but this fact was known in advance and the chautauqua advertised to begin at the evening session, and no disappointments resulted to the chautauqua patrons.

In 1910 the system of moving outfits, crews, and talent was adopted that is practiced to this day, and seems to be the last word on this phase of chautauqua management. The plan provides that instead of starting the first seven towns on a given circuit simultaneously, the circuit opens with one town, and the talent for first day at that town proceeds, next day, to town number two, next day to town number three, and thus continues to be first day talent throughout the entire season. The same rotation is followed by the talent for second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh days; making possible the arrangement of a balanced program which was out of the question under the old plan.

As has been indicated in another place, eight outfits are provided for each circuit on which assemblies continue through a period of seven days. This arrangement allows a full day and a half and two nights to intervene between the closing program at one town and the opening program at the next. We describe in another chapter the plan and detail

of the improved method of transporting equipment and talent, which is now reduced to a smoothly operating system without friction and with considerable economic saving.

One of the ever present and pressing problems of the early days was the matter of perfecting arrangements, while the chautauqua was yet in session, for a return engagement the following year. The difficulty had its foundation in the fact that local citizens could not readily understand at the beginning why they should be called upon to furnish any kind of a guarantee of patronage to the circuit managers. They understood well enough the necessity for this the first year the chautauqua came, but in most cases insisted that, once the chautauqua was introduced and the people had the opportunity to judge of its character, it ought thenceforth to stand on its own merits.

There was necessity at this point for a good deal of educational effort on the part of the circuit managers through their representatives in the field. It was pointed out to the local citizens that the public school does not rely upon voluntary support, but that the funds necessary for its operation are provided by the force of public law by means of taxation. They also pointed to the fact that so worth-

while an institution as the church cannot meet its expenses by trusting to the support of casual donors, but that a bona fide subscription is taken to insure funds sufficient for its operation. Many other arguments of a similar character were advanced to make clear to local citizens their responsibility in connection with the chautauqua, and the absolute necessity for their hearty coöperation.

While every effort was made in the early days to secure definite contracts with groups of local citizens for the return of the chautauqua the following year, it oftentimes occurred that such definite contracts could not be procured, and the circuit superintendent was forced to procure subscriptions for season tickets a year in advance. It also oftentimes occurred that where regular contracts were entered into by the circuit management and local citizens, these same local citizens required that advance season ticket subscriptions be taken as a kind of guarantee in support of their contract, so that throughout the early years the advance sale of season tickets of admission necessarily became the backbone and main reliance of circuit chautauqua operation.

This method of handling the business was never looked upon with great favor by the managers. Experience had proven that subscriptions taken a whole

year in advance would shrink from fifteen to twenty-five per cent before the day of delivery arrived. This shrinkage was caused by removal from the community, the death of subscribers, or reverses in business fortune. Then there was a certain small per cent of the subscribers who had the faculty of forgetting that they had ever made such subscription, and who could not recognize their own signature on a subscription card signed a year before.

A second reason why this plan was frowned upon by the managers was because it was the occasion of a good deal of embarrassment to the talent folk themselves. All campaigns of ticket selling of this character were conducted from the platform after the crowd had assembled and usually following the musical prelude. The campaign was conducted a good deal after the fashion of the old style church dedication. The superintendent would take the platform and, after stating the immediate business in hand, would call for the high-minded citizen who would subscribe for a block of fifty tickets, or more. Ushers had been placed at strategic points throughout the audience, and subscription cards had previously been delivered to everyone present. After an embarrassing silence, some leading business man would arise in his place and offer to head the sub-

scription for a substantial block of season tickets. The superintendent and the ushers would then clap their hands and call for the next leading citizen who would assume a similar responsibility. By this means, within fifteen or twenty minutes, three or four hundred season tickets would be subscribed and a good start made toward the goal to be achieved, which was usually from six hundred to seven hundred and fifty tickets. The lecturer or entertainment company for the occasion would then be introduced and the program proceed.

The next afternoon this campaign of ticket selling would be reopened at the same point in the program, and perhaps an additional one hundred subscriptions would be secured. At the evening session the superintendent, having held a hurried conference with the big subscribers and other interested citizens, would solemnly state that, unless some far greater interest should be shown than had been evidenced up to this point, the chautauqua could not return to this place the following year. Then began the call for subscriptions from individuals for only such season tickets as they themselves personally would expect to use. At this session one hundred or one hundred and fifty additional subscriptions would usually be secured.

## 208 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Then came the final day. There was much speculation around the chautauqua grounds while the crowd was assembling as to whether it would be possible to complete the subscriptions. The superintendent would be cited to a certain well disposed business man who had not yet subscribed, but, upon interviewing him when he arrived upon the grounds, discovered it to be a false alarm. The leading business man offered at least a dozen excuses why he should not be expected to subscribe.

The last night arrived and the poor superintendent found that the subscription was two hundred and fifty short of the goal and that some heroic work needed to be done. After a spirited prelude by a snappy concert company, he took the platform accompanied by a well known local booster who was introduced to the audience and delivered himself of a rousing booster speech, pointing out the benefits of the chautauqua and urging his neighbors and friends to come to its rescue. Subscription cards were again distributed and a strenuous appeal made for results. After ten minutes of more or less spirited subscribing there came a lull, and the superintendent asked H. Ruthven McDonald, the Canadian baritone, let us say, to sing a song. Stepping briskly to the plat-



form McDonald soon convulsed his audience with that famous old clock song entitled "Bibbety Bob," which carried with it the suggestion of the passing of time and of opportunities being lost. Following this musical exhortation there would be widespread clapping of hands and calls for more. The superintendent would then announce that as soon as the subscription was completed McDonald would sing again, and another strenuous effort was made by the ushers, each announcing, in loud tones, every subscription received, until presently another lull seemed to call for additional music. McDonald was again presented and sang a third and fourth installment of that same "Bibbety Bob," so ingeniously handled and so abounding in rich humor as to put the tired audience completely at ease and in a frame of mind to do whatever might be required to bring back next year such excellent attractions as had graced their platform during the present assembly.

Another and final appeal brought the total subscription to seven hundred and twenty-one. Then some kindly-disposed citizen would arise and remark, with a good deal of dramatic power, that he had just held a short consultation with two or three

of his friends, and that they had decided to subscribe for the remaining twenty-nine tickets and thus assure the coming of the chautauqua next year.

There was then a loud blast of applause, which continued for a considerable time, and when it at last subsided the superintendent triumphantly announced that the chautauqua was assured for the following year. Then ensued another blast of applause, and a look of supreme satisfaction settled down over the audience as the final number of the program was introduced and proceeded with his message.

In after years when the circuit chautauquas had established themselves more thoroughly, this noisy and troublesome system was superseded by the more orderly and businesslike method of a local chautauqua committee signing a bona fide contract, pledging their coöperation in an advance campaign for the sale of season tickets, and guaranteeing that the proceeds of such sale should reach an agreed amount, usually estimated at about seventy per cent of the actual cost of the chautauqua.

Like all other businesses, the circuit chautauquas represent a kind of business evolution. Each succeeding year brought new refinements, and eliminated objectionable features and practices, until a

condition approaching stability was established. And the local underwriters in most communities have come to realize that one of the best gifts the circuit chautauqua ever bestowed upon them was in first teaching them how to work together, boost together, and pull together with a common aim, toward a common end. This principle they have applied to many other activities in their communities, from which splendid results have been achieved. So that what they first looked upon as an unwelcome task proved, wherever it was given a fair trial, to be a blessing in disguise.

Another one of the knotty problems of the early day circuits was the question of location. As has been previously noted, the very name chautauqua originally suggested outdoor life in the woods and by the waters. So when the circuit managers began to promote chautauquas in county seat towns throughout the Middle West they inevitably alighted in many communities where woods and waters were not to be found. In nearly all cases such of the local population as had enjoyed the privilege of attending the earlier chautauquas so located, expressed the gravest fears whenever it was proposed to plant a chautauqua in spite of the absence of these natural advantages.

## 212 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Consequently, wherever one of these towns chanced to be located near a wood or stream such site was usually chosen, even though located a considerable distance from the town, and this almost invariably entailed severe loss to the management.

When Mr. Bartell planted his first chautauqua at Fort Scott, Kansas, he made every attempt to use a downtown location as near as possible to the center of population. But the people would not have it so and compelled him to locate in Fern Lake Park, considerably removed from the city limits. This was an amusement park, beautifully wooded to be sure and with a fine body of water, but it was too distant to permit the people to come on foot to the sessions, and a single-track street car line afforded the only means of transportation. With the meagre number of small cars operated by this line it would have been impossible to transport to and from that park a sufficient number of people to make a successful assembly possible, no matter how greatly the people themselves might wish to attend. As it turned out, it required three to four hours to transport back to town those who had found ways and means to get out to the grounds. In one instance, several hundred stragglers who had waited an hour or more after the close of the evening session, gave

up the idea of street car service and started to walk through the dark to their homes. A heavy down-pour of rain caught these stragglers where there was no means of shelter, and that unhappy experience put an effectual quietus on any further attempt on their part to attend a night session of chautauqua.

The following year, under Mr. Horner's management, this chautauqua was located at a favorable spot down town where it received adequate patronage.

At Cheyenne, Wyoming, the first chautauqua was located at the end of a single-track street car line two or three miles from the downtown residence section, and the experience was in every way similar to that at Fort Scott, above referred to.

Many attempts to locate in the woods, beyond reasonable walking distance from the town, invariably resulted in failure for lack of transportation facilities, and the loss of time entailed in making the trip.

It took a good while to convince the people that in its very nature a circuit chautauqua must be located as nearly as possible to the center of population. It never was designed nor intended as a camping out place for the patrons. It is a chautauqua for the busy folks, for the vast multitude

## 214 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

who have neither time nor means for camp life in the woods. *The circuit idea was born of a desire to serve that overwhelming majority of the population who, unless some means were provided for bringing the chautauqua close to their very doors, would be forever denied its privileges and advantages.*

After a number of years this principle began to be fairly well understood, and the practice became general of erecting the circuit chautauqua tents at conveniently located central points readily accessible and where the busy business man could attend the sessions without being absent from his place of business more than an hour and a half.

Another one of the problems in the early days of circuit chautauquas was the matter of publicity. We have referred in the previous chapter to the many forms of advertising originated and distributed by the chautauqua managements. In addition to this means of advertising it was always known to be highly desirable that the newspapers should be encouraged to lend their powerful aid. Hence the more successful of the early day managers appropriated considerable sums of money for the purchase of display advertising space in all local newspapers.

But newspaper men are not unlike other human beings, and in the early days it was not uncommon to encounter a great deal of newspaper unconcern and oftentimes the most hostile opposition. Numerous instances could be cited where editors flatly refused to print anything bearing on the program beyond what they were paid for at regular rates. Sometimes an editor would break forth in the most violent terms in a broadside and general denunciation of the whole chautauqua movement. But for the most part, be it said to the credit of the newspaper fraternity, they have been free with their space and liberal supporters of the chautauqua from a publicity standpoint.

But the circuit chautauqua had been in existence for five years and had been everywhere recognized as a powerful and growing influence in public affairs before the metropolitan newspapers condescended to give it even passing notice.

Finally the *Indianapolis News* having sensed the rising influence and increasing power of the chautauqua platform in relation to public questions, sent E. T. Lewis, a staff correspondent, out into the west to make a thorough investigation and a full report of his findings.

Mr. Lewis came, and soon discovered that he had

alighted upon a field rich in news value, especially from the standpoint of politics. He, accordingly, sent to the *News* a series of interesting letters under dates of September 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th, 1908, that constituted the first real recognition the circuit chautauquas had enjoyed from the metropolitan press.

From Iowa he reported how the old guard stand-patters were feeling the new political force of the chautauqua, and in what he styled "glimpses behind the curtain," gave a comprehensive review of the heroic work of Albert B. Cummins and Robert M. LaFollette in smashing the power of the railroad kings and freeing the people from the yoke of financial and political bondage.

He wrote from Kansas of the downfall of Senator Long, and attributed it to the rising political power of the chautauqua, from which platform the rising exponents of progressiveism had thundered their messages.

From Missouri he wrote of the work of Joseph Folk and the marvelous spectacle of his advocating the election of progressive republicans, and of LaFollette's advocacy of the election of democratic progressiveness; and ascribed the new condition that



prevailed in popular thought and political action wholly to the influence of the chautauquas.

Throughout the series of political letters, Mr. Lewis spoke in glowing terms of the tremendous influence then being wielded by Hanley of Indiana, Folk of Missouri, Hoch of Kansas, and W. J. Bryan, in the messages they were delivering over a vast territory on the platforms of the chautauquas.

A cartoon published in that paper, here reproduced on another page, flamingly set forth the chautauqua as "a new figure in the political arena." In the center stands the chautauqua gladiator clad in armor. In his left hand he holds a shield labeled "Facts." In his right he has a broad sword labeled "Political Independence." He has just finished an encounter with a Standpatter who may be seen in full retreat at the rear, his broken sword lying at the feet of the gladiator who has turned in defiance toward a group of machine politicians standing hesitant and evidently fear-stricken. At the rear may be seen a group of Yellow Dog politicians falling backward from the wall of the arena, while on the top of the entrance arch stands a small boy representing the public in an attitude of jubilation, waving his hat high in the air and yelling "Whee!"

## 218 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

This cartoon is fairly representative of what was the conception of the metropolitan editors of that time of the nature and purpose of chautauqua, and while it was — as later years disclosed — a little wide of the mark so far as the plans and aims of the



From the *Indianapolis News*, September 10, 1908

managers were concerned, there can be no doubt that it was a rather accurate prophesy of a political influence afterward exerted by the chautauquas.

Gradually the metropolitan press began to devote more attention to the growing institution, and finally the magazines took it up and numerous write-ups of chautauqua managers have been published as well as interesting stories of chautauqua experiences by some of the prominent people who have gone down the line as talent.

It might not be amiss at this point to refer briefly to a problem of the early days arising out of the opposition of certain political interests to the work the chautauqua was attempting to do. It frequently occurred that if a public official appeared upon the platform who was well known for his party affiliations, those of the opposing party would accuse the management of having "sold out" to the other side. But managers have almost uniformly, we believe, balanced their programs politically by an honest effort to have all sides fairly represented, and so far as political propaganda is concerned, we believe that the chautauqua platform has afforded to the general public the best opportunity yet offered to the world for hearing all sides of political questions and being

thus rendered competent to pass unbiased judgment upon men, events, and policies.

The "wet" crowd, the liberal crowd — so-called — the advocates of the "wide-open" policy, the gamblers and the ne'er-do-wells have always been consistently opposed to the chautauqua, and perhaps will continue to be.

The most serious problem of all has been that of coöperation. The Independents early accused circuit managers of being in the business solely for profit, and many have given tearful utterances to the belief that the chautauqua was becoming thoroughly commercialized. This criticism was generally made without due consideration for the fact that every business launched for whatsoever purpose must find the means for sustenance within its own activities. No sane man ever disputed that the laborer is worthy of his hire, and that the responsible managers of worth-while chautauqua circuits are entitled to reasonable compensation for their efforts.

This unfortunate propaganda about commercialization has cost the circuits a pretty penny, and has rendered the task more difficult than it ought to have been, of developing that degree of coöperation between managers and the local citizens whereby

proper foundations for true chautauqua success may be laid.

In the early days of circuit promotion, and even down through the years, in every community have been found business men who believed themselves to be "too busy" in looking after their private affairs to lend any aid to a public movement such as chautauqua promotion. Another class of citizens encountered has been the man who says he "cannot see that there is any profit to me in this chautauqua; it draws but few people from the surrounding towns, and I have not noticed that business is any better during chautauqua week."

These two classes of individuals represent a minority which still persists in a refusal to see that possible financial profit is not *all* there is in business. Wiser men have come to see that it is just as much their business to encourage an institution that helps in the education and happiness of the community, as it is to sell groceries, dress goods, or lumber, and that the profit arising from the former may be far more valuable, even if not so apparent, as that which arises from the latter.

After twenty years of circuit chautauquas, the leaders of every community have come to under-

## 222 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

stand that, for the promulgation of every worthwhile public enterprise they should cast to the winds all thought of personal financial gain, lend their influence, their time, and their labors in an unsparing effort to promote and develop whatever is capable of making a real contribution to the life and happiness of the people. This has come to be looked upon as good business, as well as good sentiment, and the circuit chautauquas are undoubtedly entitled to large credit for having developed this modern idea and practice.

## CHAPTER XI

### HOW THE CHAUTAUQUA IS PREPARED AND DELIVERED

It is an interesting story, and one that has never been adequately told, as to the numerous things that enter into the making of a circuit chautauqua and its programs. In these days of many discoveries and great accomplishments, we are apt to accept the finished product quite as a matter of course, and thus overlook the fact that an incalculable amount of toil and trouble may have been exerted and experienced to make these things possible.

In the very nature of the case, all things entering into the making of a chautauqua must be secured and organized into functioning shape a long way in advance. The talent, the bookings, the dating, the routing, preparation of advertising, selection of crews, superintendents, supervisors, and the determining as to what, when, and where physical equipment is to be used, are all matters that must be determined in advance, and yet be left subject to change should emergencies so dictate.

As to the length of time prior to its use that it

## 224 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

must be secured, talent probably takes the lead. Contracts are entered into a year, two years, and sometimes five years in advance. While the country affords ample material for the creation of suitable chautauqua programs, it is a most difficult and trying task to discover, out of the vast amount offered, what is best and most suited to the needs of the hour. Managers who give pains-taking attention to the real needs of the field served are always on the alert to discover new things of practical value for use on programs, and this requires the most careful watching throughout the years for any hint or suggestion that will lead to the discovery of a rare quality of talent which, though perhaps yet unknown to the public, is equipped to render the desired service.

While it is true that the major portion of talent making up a chautauqua program is contracted for within twelve months of the date of its appearance, there are certain time-tried and standard attractions that are sometimes booked several years in advance. The scouting, hunting, testing and trying-out of suitable talent constitutes a most important department of chautauqua management, and requires a quality of insight and an understanding of wants



and needs that few men possess in any marked degree.

The successful manager must also, by all means, be a student of affairs. He must not only keep fully abreast of the times, but actually ahead of the times. He must have the faculty for sensing the trend of things; must possess a kind of prophetic vision of what will be apt and profitable in thought leadership a year or years in the future. To be so equipped he must of necessity be a constant reader, an argus-eyed observer, and a keen and accurate analyst of the heterogeneous thought, passions, and prejudices that daily utter the innermost life of the world.

He must be a cosmopolite as well. His talent must serve populations of widely varying tastes and development. He must so flavor his programs as to catch the fancy of the thoughtless who care only for entertainment, as well as furnish strong food for the hungry thinker. He must select, or build, such entertainment with so flexible appeal as to satisfy the needs of rich and poor, educated and ignorant alike. If he should cater to the less mature of the multitude, his work would fail for lack of high purpose. If he should ignore the multitude, he would soon "go broke."

## 226 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Like the editor-in-chief of a great newspaper, or the head of a university, the manager who succeeds in conducting a circuit, worthy to bear the name chautauqua, must be a many-sided man, an active element in everyday affairs, a keen student, a wise diplomat, a purposeful builder with a vision for greater and better days ever before him.

After a given chautauqua circuit has been once established it is desirable that, as nearly as possible, it be perpetuated as to its make-up of towns year after year. It will readily be seen how this practice would naturally tend to solidify and unify the work sought to be done, and reduce the overhead charges, which must in any case be considerable, in maintaining a long list of towns on a chautauqua circuit.

The practice has been for the superintendent in charge to be made personally responsible, while on the ground in the actual delivery of the chautauqua program, to enter into contract relations in behalf of the management he represents with local chautauqua supporters for the delivery of a chautauqua assembly the following year. Contract forms, embodying all the mutual agreements and covenants are provided, and usually a small committee of interested citizens joins with the superintendent in the

task of securing signatures to this contract. By this means subscribers, in number ranging from twenty-five in some cases to one hundred or more in others, enter into an agreement to conduct an advance campaign for the sale of a specified number of season tickets. This agreement on the part of the local citizens not only guarantees their interest in the chautauqua as an institution, but is intended to further guarantee their coöperation in securing a sufficient amount of business to enable the chautauqua to operate and pay its way. Various means have been employed by different managers in attempting to secure this much needed coöperation, but it is the concensus of opinion that no plan that has yet been devised has been so fruitful of coöperation as the one here referred to. It will be seen that in the matter of booking, therefore, the work is usually accomplished a whole year in advance. Sometimes the superintendent, for some reason, fails to secure the contract while on the ground, and it becomes necessary for the management to send a representative back into that field and perhaps spend several days in securing the necessary number of signatures to justify a return to the community the following year. Where this is done it adds an

## 228 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

unnecessary item of expense to chautauqua management, which of course must ultimately come out of the consumer.

In the early days, when the circuits were first being established, quite a different method was pursued. The managers themselves, in most instances, went directly to the towns where it was thought advisable to locate chautauquas and laid the first foundations. Leading citizens were hunted out and personally interviewed, and oftentimes mass meetings were called where the chautauquas as a proposition were discussed pro and con, sometimes at great length. At that time it was popularly thought that such movements as the chautauqua should necessarily be under the auspices of some organized body, such as Commercial Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, Volunteer Fire Departments, and the like. This did not prove to be true in practical use, and is one of the prime reasons why the early ventures in chautauqua were almost uniformly financial failures.

One of the most complicated and knotty problems connected with the business of managing a circuit of chautauquas is encountered when the question of dates for holding these chautauquas comes to be determined. These difficulties arise primarily out of a desire on the part of communities to choose their

own dates, when it is manifestly the province of the management to establish these dates, if anything bordering on orderly procedure or economic management is to be achieved. Every community has its community activities such as county fairs, homecomings, and other celebrations. It is most desirable, both from the standpoint of the local citizens and of the management, that the chautauqua dates should avoid these as far as possible; but the attempt to adjust matters of this kind often leads to the most perplexing difficulties. For instance, a given chautauqua circuit of sufficient magnitude to operate continuously from April to September must necessarily open in the Sunny South for climatic reasons. The chautauqua being an institution which delivers its programs and activities altogether out of doors, it would be a rather chilly procedure to open such a circuit in the Dakotas in April.

The manager, therefore, plans to open his extensive circuit, let us say in Florida, where even in the month of April the air is full of the odor of sweet-scented flowers, and the glowing generosity of a semi-tropical sun affords the necessary chautauqua atmosphere. In order that this circuit may be routed with proper regard for transportation costs, the dates of the various assemblies should be so

## 230 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

arranged that the trip would be gradually northward, picking up the towns to be visited in an orderly way considered from a geographical standpoint, and running northward with the sun and the weather, cross Georgia, perhaps making a loop into Alabama, back through Georgia into South Carolina, still northward through the turpentine country and into the Virginias, and by midsummer serving the regions blessed with the cool breezes from the Great Lakes, thence tending southward as the first hints of autumn make their appearance, bringing the circuit to a close as the katydids begin to sing, as far to the southward, at least, as the latitude of St. Louis. This would be an ideal routing as man proposes — it is not so readily achieved as fate oftentimes disposes.

In an attempt to make a reality, if possible, of the more or less idealistic routing conception referred to above, the conscientious date clerk, wise in the lore of railway guides, opens his extensive lay-out and after stupendous and painstaking labor succeeds in establishing a circuit dating based upon geographical locations, safe train connections, and reasonable transportation costs. These dates are then submitted to the local committees in the various towns to be visited, with high hopes and many fears.

A fortnight rolls by and a long letter arrives at the manager's desk signed by a committee of protest, and carrying the unwelcome information that the dates proposed for the chautauqua at Daleville, let us say, fall within a week of the date already set for the county fair. From another point along the line there comes a protest against the proposed dates to the effect that another town within the same county is scheduled to hold its chautauqua on practically the same dates, and that something must be done about it. Still other protests pour in from other points on the circuit, until it becomes apparent that sympathetic and intelligent heed will have to be given to the numerous protests on file.

The date clerk again gets down his railroad guides. His house of cards has been wickedly wrecked, and the whole laborious business of routing a chautauqua circuit has to be gone over and the route practically rebuilt. After infinite pains a workable routing is again established, with relief found for all protesting committees so far reported. The new dates are then submitted for approval. The date clerk waits with fear and trembling, for in adjusting the dates which were found to be in conflict with those of other community activities and

about which there had been objection raised, it had been necessary to change dates at other points also where silence had apparently given consent.

Then a fresh batch of trouble appears on the scene. Letters and telegrams begin to pour into headquarters expressing strong dissatisfaction with the new arrangement. Let this serve as a sample: "The date you first submitted was satisfactory. Why did you change it? This second dating you propose conflicts with our homecoming celebration. Give us a date ten days earlier or later and all will be well."

After the receipt of a number of such communications the tired date clerk again gets down his railroad guides, and with his task grown vastly more difficult by the introduction of many complications, lays out a brand new scheme of dates and bends his energies to the task of arranging them.

A month later all seems serene, the dates appear to be established and the railroad genius who worked it all out may now devote himself to new duties in some collateral claims of his department. But no, it is not to be so. A belated letter arrives from Mr. Thomas Mix of Harrisonville, bearing the information that he has "today returned from a month's trip east and find your favor of February 21st with



first schedule of proposed chautauqua dates. These will need to be materially altered in our case, as the dates you assign to us overlap the dates of a Modern Woodman picnic."

Still another comes from a town that has just decided to put on a rousing Fourth of July celebration and requests that their chautauqua dates be changed to avoid conflict with said celebration, and so on for various and sundry reasons, or for no reason at all, the requests for date adjustment keep coming on. As a sample of the flimsy character of some of these requests, there is a historical instance on file in the archives of one of the prominent chautauqua managements where a change of dates was demanded because those submitted fell during the "dark of the moon."

But there is an end to all things, and this job finally gets finished. The ingenious date clerk at length succeeds in eliminating most of the difficulties and the dates and route of the chautauqua circuit are at last reduced to cold script on the record books at general headquarters.

It is fitting and proper to further state in this connection that the infinite difficulties of dating and routing chautauqua circuits, as hinted at above, have decreased materially in volume as the circuits be-

## 234 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

came better established. After a term of years covering the same general field, the chautauqua circuit is pretty generally conceded first place in the choice of dates, and local activities are as a rule arranged with the idea of avoiding the chautauqua dates as far as possible. It does not take a philosopher or a business genius to see at a glance, that, if chautauqua circuits are to be conducted with any show of economy as to railroad transportation costs, the matter of dating and routing must be left in the hands of the general management. This happy condition seems now pretty generally to prevail, and the more serious troubles of the dating clerk are matters of more or less ancient history.

Another important consideration entering largely into the success of circuit chautauqua management is that of proper advertising. As to the kind and quality of publicity material, there are as many opinions as there are publicity men. It does not fall within our province to discuss the relative merits of these efforts at publicity, but only to cite the fact and point out the reasons why all advertising material must be painstakingly prepared a long way in advance.

If it is desired that a circular letter shall be mailed on a given date to all the underwriters in the numer-

ous towns on a given circuit, that circular letter must be prepared at a sufficiently early date to allow time for mimeographing, say ten thousand copies. On each of these copies the name of the person addressed must be inserted, the letters must be properly signed, folded, envelopes addressed, and the letters inserted therein, sealed, stamped, and scheduled for mailing so as to follow the general trend of the chautauqua dating and appear at their destinations at the psychological time to make their appeal effective.

Trained publicity agents begin the study of the quantity, quality, variety, and distribution of advertising material six months in advance of the opening date, and where well handled, every detail is carefully considered and recorded so that the whole scheme of publicity unfolds in a natural and effective way at the appointed time and place for which it is intended.

In the olden days of independent chautauquas the grade of advertising was carried on vastly inferior lines to that done by the well managed chautauqua circuits. In the olden times it was customary for business men, with little training in publicity, to formulate all plans, and aside from an unattractive program booklet carrying pages of rules and regula-

tions, together with rather brief mention of the attractions scheduled to appear, little of a true advertising program was ever attempted; and that which was done was at excessive cost compared to the wholesale way in which circuit advertising is now accomplished.

It may be readily seen by the careful observer that a uniform plan of advertising a hundred chautauquas, with uniform talent and management, can be done on a more extensive and elaborate scale and with more inviting style at far less expense per town than could possibly be accomplished by isolated and independent action.

Properly to conduct a circuit of chautauquas of seven days duration each, it is necessary to employ the services of at least eight superintendents, who are to have charge of the platforms, make all announcements, introduce talent, rebook the town for the succeeding year, unify and intensify chautauqua sentiment, and fully represent the general management in the conduct of the local chautauqua.

There must necessarily be as many sets of crew boys as there are superintendents. These crews consist of college students in the main, and the work has come to supply a very lucrative and pleasant kind of employment during the college vacation

period that is deeply appreciated by these same boys. Under various managements these crews number from two to five or six. One man is given charge of the physical property and is called the property man. Another is made cashier, sells the tickets from an improvised box office, makes daily reports, and is responsible for all moneys received and locally expended. Others are designated as ushers, and look after the comfort and convenience of patrons, serving them in every possible way. Another member of the crew is a young woman in charge of the junior chautauqua work, conducting sessions generally in the forenoon, and by songs, exercises, folk stories, and various means, performing a real service for the youngsters during the whole chautauqua assembly.

Long before the date of opening the circuit these superintendents, crews, and other workers must all be definitely assigned to their places throughout the season, and it is interesting to note that John Jones, a crew boy, beginning his season at Miami, would have every one of his movements recorded in the books of the general office so that if it were of interest to his parents to know where he would be on the 17th of August of the same year, the fact could readily be established by reference to the record

## 238 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

books at the office. And this is true also of every person connected with the circuit, from the least to the greatest.

The movement of these superintendents and crews is a somewhat curious and conflicting procedure. One manager, let us say, deems it advisable that the superintendent should arrive in town one day ahead of the opening date. He will, therefore, be assigned every ninth town on the chautauqua circuit. Cashier and crew arrive with the tent top the evening before the opening date and are assigned every eighth town on the circuit. The worker among the children must spend three days in the town prior to the opening date, and is assigned every tenth town on the circuit. It will therefore be seen from this arrangement that when a given chautauqua closes the superintendent goes one way, the crew quite another, and the children's worker still another, while the property man in charge of the physical equipment moves by car-load freight on some circuits and goes still another way. All this must be painstakingly and accurately worked out a long way in advance and reduced to record on the books.

Ofttimes changes in railroad schedules necessitate hurried and hectic efforts at readjusting these and other routes, so that the whole matter of dating and

routing talent, superintendents, crews, property, and the like, assumes the proportions of a man's size job and it is very apparent from whence arises the deep-seated wish at general headquarters that all proposed dates and routing should be as little tampered with as possible.

A major chautauqua circuit requires for its operation substantially constructed tents to be used as auditoriums, and as the audiences sometimes number thousands, it is necessary that these tents be of ample proportions. The standard measurements now in use for this purpose are about 125 by 175 feet. Eight of these large tops must be provided for each seven-day circuit, and accurate provisions made for their proper transportation and delivery strictly on prearranged schedule, and for means whereby they may be quickly repaired on the field in case of accident by storm or otherwise. Enterprising managers have wonderfully elaborated the tent auditorium arrangements for the comfort and convenience of talent, as well as for the accommodation of crowds, and the evolution of the chautauqua auditorium tent furnishes an interesting story which is told in another chapter.

The matter of providing a spacious and proper stage for the appearance of the talent, made of

proper materials and supported in a substantial way affording the largest degree of safety, is another item requiring careful attention. Then there is the fencing made of canvas supported by poles guyed on both sides with ropes, and the amount of fencing required at a given point is determined in advance by the known measurements about the enclosure to be used for chautauqua grounds. This varies very considerably throughout the territory served.

The providing of suitable seating for the audiences is another matter that requires a great deal of thought and careful planning. The kind of seats to be used, the relative number of settees and chairs, the size of the section that should be reserved for the accommodation of those who are willing to pay a small fee for such reservation, and the keeping of all this physical equipment in condition against the damages arising from thoughtless use by patrons, loading and unloading, and the exigencies of wind and weather make up another item of considerable advance attention — all of which must be carefully worked out so that there will be no lapse anywhere once the machinery is set in full motion.

Suitable lighting must be provided in advance and carefully recorded in the books at headquarters and



scheduled for attention at the proper time. On a given circuit perhaps ninety-five per cent of the towns visited have electric light plants, and here the problem is comparatively simple, except that advance contracts need to be made in each instance with regard to rates, connecting charges, and other service. In towns where there are no electric light plants other arrangements must be made far in advance for proper lighting, and some of the various means of lighting, for the most part by way of gasoline burning lamps, the necessary supplies must be arranged for and scheduled to be delivered at the proper time. Even the little detail of the number of gas mantles necessary is to be carefully worked out, the same boxed, securely packed, and shipped at the right time.

In conducting a large circuit of chautauquas the item of tickets is a large one, and months before the opening date contracts are let for the manufacture of rolls upon rolls of tickets of admission. These are allotted according to previous estimates to the various towns, and oftentimes some very ingenious plans are worked out, with the coöperation of talent, for keeping the cashiers amply supplied with tickets. A record of all the numbers of these tickets is kept

## 242 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

in the office at headquarters, and a vast amount of painstaking care must be devoted to this important branch of chautauqua management.

The display advertising for use in the newspapers is another matter that requires expert attention and must all be built and determined as to character, quality, and volume for each individual newspaper throughout the circuit, and all reduced to such a system of delivery and distribution as will insure maximum results and no lapses in the service, throughout a field covering many states and publications running up into the hundreds.

Year by year new exigencies arise requiring certain changes in the forms of contracts to meet new conditions arising, or for the adoption of a plan thought by the managers to be of a superior character for carrying out the coöperative principle between headquarters and the local citizens. The task of sensing the need of these changes, and working them out in practical form, is another matter demanding high grade business ability and keen foresight.

On some circuits the movement of the physical equipment of chautauqua, exclusive of the main top, is accomplished by freight and constitutes a carload shipment. In the early days every single piece of

such freight had to be listed on the bills of lading, weighed, and classified as to rates, and the checking of these bills, in most cases carrying overcharges, was a veritable Chinese puzzle, and entailed no end of correspondence and attempts at adjustment with the railroad companies. Some years ago, however, the Redpath Vawter Chautauqua System of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, after years of effort, succeeded in inducing the Interstate Commerce Commission to grant a classification covering the entire shipment, which was designated from that time on as a "Chautauqua Outfit." Since that time the work of taking care of these shipments at the general office has been materially simplified, but the routing of these carload shipments, aggregating during a season approximately one hundred carload movements, is another matter demanding painstaking and able advance care.

The storage and protection of this physical equipment during the inactive period of the year requires ample warehouse facilities, and, as this equipment rolls in in freight cars at the end of the season, it must be carefully assorted and so stored as to be readily found and accessible through the winter months, during which time a capable repair man goes over every piece putting it in ship-shape, mak-

## 244 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

ing it practically as good as new, for use at the beginning of the next active season.

Two or three advance men are sent out from headquarters to appear at every town on the circuit at stated intervals in advance of the opening dates, whose business it is to distribute and post special advertising material, enlist the coöperation and support of the local citizens, insure the completion of the advance campaign for the sale of season tickets, and generally create and maintain a proper advance enthusiasm in each locality to arouse the citizenship to real chautauqua values and insure an adequate interest for the opening day. The selection, training, and handling of these advance men is another item requiring careful and intelligent attention.

The successful circuit manager is a strong believer in advertising and usually employs a publicity director who has had technical training, and who can readily absorb the peculiar atmosphere of chautauqua promotion. This director, together with the general manager and the heads of departments, with the advice and consent of field managers and experienced advance men, not only keep their eyes open throughout the year for anything appearing in print that is suggestive of a good idea, but by intimate and extensive collaboration and by the comparison

of ideas, create special kinds and designs of advertising that at the proper time are passed upon, rejected, or adopted for use on the circuit. As a sample of the variety of advertising items, we might mention an incomplete list of these used by one of the major circuits in 1920, which include the following: Calendars, street car cards, program folders, herald programs, window cards, window card spreads, large muslin banners, medium muslin banners, small muslin banners, thirty-six inch pennants, muslin daters, street streamers, automobile banners, windshield stickers, arrow tack cards, for sale cards, lecture window cards, one-sheet posters, circular letters to underwriters, newspaper chautauqua stories, display advertisements, direct mail advertisements, special display for special attractions, etc. The writing of the copy for all of these, deciding upon the shape, size, and artistic design of each, proof reading and printing, and judicious and economical distribution is a field of activity by itself of very obvious importance.

Then there are the numerous blanks to be used in shipping directions for all kinds of supplies to be sent out from headquarters, the movements of special equipment on the field and the carload movements of freight, report blanks of many kinds by the

## 246 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

means of which headquarters is kept informed of all transactions on the circuit and many other such important considerations requiring accurate, able, advance attention so that the whole matter of delivering the attractions on a long circuit extending through a hundred days, from the time the first advance man takes the trail, and the first carload of freight moves out of the warehouse, until the last carload of freight returns in the late autumn, everything will be found in its place at the time needed, and the whole vast machinery will be working with exact precision, without friction anywhere.

It is needless to point out that the systematizing and orderly arrangement of this mass of details was not the accomplishment of a single season's work, but represents a steady and rapid progress from rather awkward beginnings to the efficient and orderly arrangements in vogue today.

The inhabitants of a peaceful community, observing that a huge brown tent has been erected on an inviting spot in their neighborhood, and being the possessors of a number of season tickets, lay aside their coats, adjust their straw hats, pick up a palm-leaf fan and walk leisurely to the chautauqua grounds, there to repose in the inviting shade on a comfortable seat and enjoy the high grade attrac-

tions appearing on the platform. To them it may all appear to be a very simple and matter-of-course affair. It has been the intention of the author, in reciting the things contained in this chapter, to acquaint those who love the chautauqua with the vast amount of toil and trouble entering into the building and delivery of the same on so grand a scale and in so smooth running fashion.

## CHAPTER XII

### DOWN THE LINE

Nobody, not even the most prosy-minded, can ever make the trip "down the line" on a chautauqua circuit without a realization that he is moving in a veritable wonderland. There is so much to see. And the imaginative are provided with opportunities for seeing so much more than the things that merely "are."

It is a gay journey, opening with surprises, and continuing to find them in increasing numbers and interest as the trip advances. Every day a fresh new town; every day a fresh and new audience; every day a fresh and new landscape; every day a fresh and new inspiration; and every day affording ample opportunities for full and free expression of what is nearest and dearest to the heart — the veritable outbursts of the inner consciousness.

But before the journey may be attempted a fine lot of careful preparation and planning must first be done. We cannot go as and where we will, but as and where the railroads will let us. With this fact before them, the helpers at general headquarters



figure out the difficult schedules months in advance and reduce it all to print. Every individual attraction is provided with a copy, fully detailing every movement by train, by auto, by bus, together with all connections, transfers and portages, day and night.

Ten days before the date of the opening of the first town on the circuit, a railroad car rolls out of the warehouse, laden with the equipment necessary for a "set-up." Next day another rolls forth. Next day another, and so on thus until twelve carloads have gone forth one each to the first twelve towns on the circuit. Arriving at their destination the several crews in charge unload the equipment and have it transferred to the grounds, usually the lawn of a ward school, or a vacant plot at the edge of the town. Here they make the "layout" of the "set-up" and drive the many stakes needed much after the fashion of the circus man. Small boys in plenty eagerly eye their every movement. They then hoist the huge center poles into place and guy them securely. Then they erect the canvas fence about the premises, arrange the seating and staging in convenient form for speedy installation. Then up goes the "pup tent," which is to serve as a home for the crew during the term of their sojourn there.

## 250 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

They make arrangements for meals, provide for water, gas, electricity, and whatever other service may be needed. A drayload or two of great trunks or canvas bags are dumped upon the grounds, and five pairs of handy hands set lustily to work lacing together the big brown top that is to serve as a shelter from sun and shower through the chautauqua. This is hoisted into place, the side walls are hung up, the seating and staging are installed, and by noon of the opening day all is in readiness, apple pie and ship-shape, with a well ordered ticket booth well out in front and a college student in charge, ready to accommodate all comers to the grand attraction. Altogether the big tent and the encircling canvas fence present an inviting figure as well as a rather imposing spectacle, invading the peace and quiet of the orderly and respectable community.

The first day of the season there is but one chautauqua in operation. The next day there are two, the next three, and so on until seven are in simultaneous operation. The seventh night the first one closes and the outfit is loaded hurriedly onto a passenger train and speeded away for "set-up" number two, at town number nine on the circuit. And thus, as when a great flock of birds is feeding in a field, the rearmost keep rising and flying forward, alight-

ing just in advance of the vanguard, so do these outfits arise and sail away to the front. Seven are in constant, simultaneous operation, and one always on the move, until the last town is reached and they roll leisurely back to the warehouse.

The town is all astir for the opening, and this is repeated in every town to the end of the circuit. The local boosters have sent out the last solicitors for the final clean-up on the season ticket sale. The stage is all set. The first day talent is at the hotel. Two o'clock in the afternoon sees long lines of gayly dressed people filing down the streets and settling within the easy seats under the big top. Their faces wear an expectant look. There is a genial buzz of suppressed conversation all about. An occasional parting of the stage curtain gives mute testimony to the presence of platform stars soon to burst upon the scene. Presently the curtain lifts and the superintendent steps out boldly to the front center and bids everybody a hearty welcome. "Come early and often and be assured you may make yourselves at home."

In a few well chosen words, upon which he has likely been coached by some of the wise ones, the superintendent introduces the first number. A gay party of musicians bursts from the rear entrance,

## 252 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

makes its bows right, left, and center, and the chautauqua is on. Following this, which is likely a prelude, comes a lecture on some topic of interest, the afternoon program coming to a close at about four o'clock, after which the people intermingle with many a handshake and greeting between neighbors and old chautauqua friends. Then away to shop and farm, to hurry through the work from which two hours have been snatched, but two happy hours that already have brought relief to tired muscles and tense nerves.

Nightfall sees a repetition of this same enactment, with many added faces, and numerous "couples" of the younger generation, seated at the rear, all eyes, all ears, and all happiness, with the prospect of a full week of the choicest entertainment, and an oasis of companionship after the desert of once a week as a regular practice. By the third day the whole population becomes aroused to the fact that something extraordinary is transpiring in their midst, and the chautauqua reaches a climax in attendance and power that is generally sustained throughout the balance of the week.

The first day talent in the first town remains first day talent all down the line. The same is true of talent for the second day and all other days. By

this orderly process, on a seven-day circuit, seven sets of daily talent is so handled on the circuit plan that a continuous performance is maintained at seven points over a period of seven days each, throughout a period of a hundred or more consecutive days and nights. The railroad jumps rarely exceed an average of forty miles per day, and talent is enabled to sleep in comfortable hotel beds, at accustomed hours, with rare exceptions. Thus the platformists are always at their best and suffer few inconveniences but for exceptional cases rarely occurring.

The first-day talent leaves next morning for new conquests. A wave of the hand to the superintendent, who accompanied them to the train, and they are gone. A brisk ride brings them to town number two, where a brand new superintendent awaits them at the station platform. Another pleasant sojourn amid new scenes and new upturned faces and away again on the gentle turn of another day. A look at the papers, a walk to the mill dam and waterfall, a few peeps into the store windows, a ride in the famous auto of a chautauqua fan, "glad to meet you" to a few new folks, an interested survey of the map of the circuit to see where we are going, a nap, a bath, and off to the grounds for another demon-

## 254 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

stration of genius and her powers. This is the life! This is the inspiration! This is what makes up the business and furnishes the nerve of the average platformist over the whole period of the circuit's lifetime.

From the standpoint of talent, every day a first chance at an audience and that same day the very last chance; a continuing spur to highest endeavor, a constant reproach for slovenly service.

And it is out of doors. The winds of sweet summer sweep across the pathway, laden with the perfume of blooming flowers. The birds sing in the trees. All day long the busy people go about their pleasant tasks, still free and unafraid. The roar of the huge marts is absent. There is none of the oppressiveness of overpopulation, and the folks live in real homes, centered in wide, cool space, inviting and reposeful. Every day the upturned faces of the multitude constitute an inquiry into the unknown—an earnest quest of all the heart has longed for out of all time past and gone.

Too often have the writers of magazine articles pictured all this as a kind of barnstorming tour, the elite parading before the "hoosiers." But the thoughtful will not fail to discover that out there in the audience is a "gem, of purest ray serene." In

another a possible poet of tomorrow; the statesmen, preachers, editors, teachers, scientists, travelers, philosophers, diplomats, and managers of tomorrow's affairs. Be it remembered that Lincoln, Grant, and a long list of immortals sprang from the unpretentious soil, out of the humblest homes, squatted away out of sight and sound of the big round world. If the chautauqua platformists have furnished big opportunity for the people, how much more have the crowds furnished big opportunity for the platformists, for molding opinion, awakening enthusiasms, and calling the slumbering geniuses unto their own.

And then it rains. Mark you, we are out of doors. The rain comes right in the midst of the program, perhaps when the ego is uttering its choicest syllable of interpretation. A couple of hundred timid folks have early taken to their heels and are streaking it homeward to put down the bedroom windows, only to be caught in the middle of a long block and soaked to the skin before they can reach shelter. After the first gusty downpour, the noise appreciably subsides, and, just as the platformists are getting their bearings for a fresh start, a leak develops right over front center, and the patter, patter, patter of the gentle flood determines the platformists to move back to the center of the stage.

## 256 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

But no sooner is the hasty shift accomplished than another leak develops over the rear center, and presently another to the right, and then another to the left; and the platformists, quite unaccustomed to this kind of disturbance, show a decided sense of embarrassment. The vast audience out in front is at first amused at the discomfiture of the entertainers; but it soon becomes a more serious matter as particles of water begin to filter through the canvas top of the main auditorium, and here and there an umbrella is hoisted for protection. One would naturally suppose that being caught out in a rain storm under a waterproof canvas, that fails to turn water, would occasion nothing short of disgust on the part of the people. It is a curious fact, however, that quite the contrary effect is produced. Not infrequently it occurs that at about the time that the people conclude they are in for a good soaking, somebody starts up a song and the whole crowd joins in lustily, and in the best of good humor employ the time profitably rather than giving themselves over to fault-finding or fits of anger.

A moment later the rain has subsided, the people resume their places, the platformists re-appear and the program proceeds. To the delight of all it is discovered that the shower of rain has fulfilled the



canvas top and that the acoustics have been wonderfully improved. The atmosphere has been clarified, the dust settled, the leaves of the trees brightened, the green in the grass has been freshened, and the whole face of nature smiles for having been washed clean once more.

But on another day, instead of a gentle downpour of rain, a real storm bursts upon the chautauqua. As the actual time these tents are occupied amounts to only about one-eighth of the twenty-four hours of the day, there are eight chances to one that the tent will be empty when the storm strikes. The crew boys, sensing its approach, hurriedly hammer down the tent stakes, securely fasten down the side walls, make everything as secure as possible. But even the utmost precautions sometimes fail, and it is not unusual to see one of these great auditorium tents blown down and perhaps ripped into a score of pieces.

Then begins a scramble for repairs. Every well regulated crew is fully equipped with extra canvas, needles, thread, wax, adhesive tape, and other mending materials, and, as the tent must be ready for use again within a few hours, as many additional helpers as can be employed are set to work sewing, patching, mending, under high pressure. Some really

## 258 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

marvelous feats of reconstruction have been effected on the chautauqua circuits, and seldom has a wreck been so complete as to lay the tent by past the time for a regular session.

One of the features of circuit life enjoyed by talent is the matter of acquaintances made during the season. Through the first week of the trip they meet strange faces every day, but upon arriving at their eighth town they meet a superintendent and crew of college men with whom they became acquainted a week before at their first town. It is a little like finding friends in the midst of thousands of strangers. From this point through to the end of the circuit, talent is greeted daily at the station platform by superintendents and crew men with whom they had become well acquainted in towns previously visited. The talent soon gains the consciousness that they are daily in the hands of their friends who are anxious to minister to their convenience and comfort, and through this means many lasting friendships have been developed.

On one of the major circuits conducted by Redpath, the circuit talent begin their peregrinations in the semi-tropical climate of Florida. They move by east stages through many historical scenes of the Old South. They are enabled to bathe at the ocean

beach. On another day they may climb in the mountains. A week later they are moving through the pine forests. On another day they appear before an audience of coal miners. A week later their tent is pitched within the sound of vast machinery in a manufacturing district. By midsummer they are entertaining audiences on the shores of the Great Lakes, and during the season of one hundred days or more, are permitted pleasant glimpses into the life, habits, customs, hopes, and ambitions of vastly different populations distributed over a wide territory.

The first year that a five-day circuit was conducted by the Redpath Vawter System it was arranged to open the season in southern Minnesota early in June and, after serving a dozen or more towns, cross over into South Dakota.

In the latitude farther south in all previous years it had been customary to open the evening program at 7:30, and no particular attention was given to the fact that in more northerly latitudes the days are much longer, so the Dakota chautauquas were advertised to open the evening sessions at 7:30.

It proved to be a backward spring, and at the chautauqua hour in some of those Dakota towns those early June evenings the thermometer stood

around forty degrees. It was not an unusual sight to see men sitting in the audience with their overcoats on, and women wearing their furs. One man at Beresford sat through an evening lecture with his mittens on. And the twilight lingered so long that after the night session was closed, one could see the top buggies and automobiles scurrying homeward in broad day-light over the hills in all directions.

The oncoming of the five-day circuits was the signal for the invasion of all parts of the country, and this took some of the more hardy adventurers into some strange localities. In the swamp districts of southeastern Missouri and northeastern Arkansas it was not unusual for the distinguished lecturer to hear a bull-frog serenade burst out at frequent intervals during the progress of his address. Perhaps not twenty rods away a thousand of these singers joined in their merry chorus in unconscious competition with those who sought to bring a higher expression of culture to the developing community.

It oftentimes occurred that with great difficulty could a suitable location be discovered for setting up the chautauqua tent. At a town in southeastern Missouri, a careful search disclosed the fact that there was no available desirable spot to be found in

the whole community, except the site of an ancient cemetery, long abandoned for burial purposes, on the outskirts of the town. Accordingly a spot within this enclosure was selected, where the grave stones were least numerous, and it was found possible to erect the tent so that only three of these stones appeared within the enclosure. One of these stones was located about ten feet in front of the platform and faced in that direction.

The chautauqua opened at two-thirty in the afternoon with a rousing entertainment by a certain male quartette. About the middle of their opening number the eye of one of the singers fell upon this grave stone, and at the conclusion of this number, amidst the confusion of the applause, he pointed it out to his singer companions. Unconsciously they all set themselves to decipher what had been chiselled upon the stone, and momentarily forgot all about their program. The audience quickly discovered the cause of the interruption, and from a few scattered titters there broke a veritable round of hilarity. The boys speedily recovered themselves and the program proceeded without further interruption.

Among the population of that section of Missouri there are a good many negroes, and numbers of these attended the chautauqua. The tendency to super-

stition is well marked in this race and their terror of grave yards is proverbial.

Julius H. Rohde was superintendent at Caruthersville on this occasion. He stood six feet four in his stockings, and was clad in a summer suit almost white. At the close of the evening session, after the crowd had retired, Mr. Rohde was making the rounds of his tent to see that everything was secure, and emerging from a dark corner from whence an overhanging tree shut out the broad moonlight he came suddenly upon a negro woman and two children. At sight of this tall apparition the negro woman fell on her knees, extended both hands high toward Heaven and uttered a groan. The kind-hearted superintendent asked her what the trouble might be, when with apparent, unbounded relief the negro woman sprang to her feet with the exclamation, "'Fore God, Mis'r, I shore thought it was a hant."

Situated as she was at ten o'clock at night by the side of a gray tent, silent and motionless, with white tomb stones standing as gaunt sentinels in the dim light of the pale moon, and no sound anywhere save the night song of the bull-frogs in the adjacent swamp, who can blame the negro woman for her fears? Neither is the selection of this site subject

to censure. It was the best that could be done by a community anxious for progress, and struggling with the eternal problem of mankind.

This incident is related as one of the extreme cases where the best was made of a difficult situation. As a rule, the set-ups of the circuit chautauquas are in the most favored spots to be found. Sometimes the tent is tucked away under the overhanging boughs of great forest trees and assumes the aspect of the independent chautauqua, for which woods and waters were long thought quite essential. At another place the chautauqua outfit may be erected upon a fair grounds. At another upon vacant lots, and perhaps more often than elsewhere they will be found on the grounds of ward schools. Where these are not available, some municipal authorities have granted permission for closing certain streets to traffic and allowing the tent to be erected at an intersection at some suitable point within the town. But whether in woods or on plain, foothill or mountain, city lot or wind-swept prairie, an enterprising people, intent upon procuring for themselves and their children the best things that are available, have found ways and means of enjoying what the chautauqua has to bestow in tolerable comfort and convenience.

## 264 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Again referring to the resistance of the elements, the writer distinctly remembers the destruction of a tent outfit at McCook, Nebraska, in 1910. As superintendent, I had kept an eye on the weather, as a fierce gale was blowing on this the last day of chautauqua. Unaccustomed to the prevailing high winds of the plains, I had estimated that nobody would attend the chautauqua session that afternoon, as the air was full of sand, and good sized pebbles were being blown about the streets.

But to my surprise, the people turned out in great numbers and filled the tent to capacity. Dr. Lincoln McConnell delivered the lecture that afternoon and, although possessed of a powerful voice, he was unable to make himself heard for more than a few rows of seats on account of the tremendous blast and the continuous flapping of the top and side walls.

I, and my crew boys, kept constant watch of the guy ropes and stakes, and the boys used the sledges freely and often, pounding the stakes deeper into the sandy soil. A heavy wind was blowing all the while, and occasional gusty swells billowed up the tent top, the whole structure heaving and groaning, and we held our breath lest it might fall down on the people and suffocate a number of them.



About the time Dr. McConnell was finishing his lecture we saw what appeared to be a low-hanging cloud approaching from the southwest. Inquiring of some local citizens we learned that this was the accompaniment of a still fiercer wind that was due to strike us within a few minutes. The lecture was ended at that point and the crowd hastily dismissed. Some advised that we let the top down. But the property man in charge maintained that the tent would be safer up than down, since there was not time sufficient to roll it up securely. So we pounded the stakes a little deeper into the soil and secured the services of husky bystanders to pull on the guy ropes to windward. About this time the fresh gale struck, and with a mighty heave ripped up a dozen stakes by their roots. The tent top on the windward side whipped down against the center pole like a great sail, and the force of the wind snapped the pole in two instantly. This was the beginning of the end. The whole structure creaked and swayed and finally fell in a jumbled mass of canvas, center poles, quarter poles, ropes, staging, seating, jumbled and tumbled together in unspeakable disorder. The outer wall, as it was drawn in, had raked the piano off the platform and it fell on its top and rolled over

on its side. The tent was down, but the destruction was not yet complete.

The howling blast shot under the canvas and lifted it high in the air, then threshed it down over the broken poles and seating like a lot of giants flaying grain. Great rents began to make their appearance, and it became evident that if the canvas were held in position by the remaining guy ropes the wind would utterly tear it to shreds.

So we knocked the remaining stakes loose, and what remained of the tent top and side walls went rolling across the street to some vacant lots in the block below, and finally lodged in the angle of a public school building nearly a block away.

Luckily this was the last day of chautauqua at McCook. We secured the school house auditorium for the final session and the next day the wrecked top was picked up and shipped with the balance of the property to the warehouse, where it was fully repaired and put in commission again the following season.

This incident is recorded here as indicative of the hazards of wind and weather incident to the business of conducting circuit chautauquas. For the most part, to be sure, fine weather prevails and severe storms are rarely encountered. The seasonal

rains occurring at intervals, unaccompanied by violent winds, only tend to furnish variety to weather that would grow monotonous by too long continued sunshine.

Another interesting development that has enhanced the pleasure of talent folks and decreased the cost of transportation, was the introduction of the Ford car on the circuits. This practice was first introduced by the Ellison-White management in the Far West where the long jumps between towns would seem to have prohibited it. But the plan was so successful that other managers took it up. Mr. Horner made use of a fleet of Fords the next year, to be followed by Mr. Vawter and White and Myers.

It is estimated that in this year of 1923, more than one-half of all chautauqua talent movements will be effected by use of motor cars. The plan has enabled managers to establish more rational routings and the platform people have been lavish in their expressions of appreciation for this improved method of travel.

What next? Well, we will just have to wait and see.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ACTION AND REACTION

No sane person has ever questioned that a valuable gift has been bestowed by the chautauqua to the people of the United States. Some have esteemed its work more highly than others, but all will agree that it has been a large contributing factor in the mental, moral, and spiritual development of the past quarter of a century.

The local chautauquas patterned in a general way after the Mother Assembly at Chautauqua, New York, introduced the idea of popularized education to select groups widely distributed throughout the United States. Wherever these were located in favorable territory, they continued for a term of years to maintain programs of quality, and were instrumental in bringing before the people public characters and men and women of celebrated achievement. By this means, and the consequent encouragement given to reading, a many-fold increase resulted in thirst for knowledge, and thousands were awakened to new appreciations of what literature, music, and the arts and sciences hold in store.

To supply the growing demand and meet the pressing needs, it became evident, early in the twentieth century, that the chautauqua could never be brought to serve the whole population so long as it consisted of isolated units of culture, fixed at favored spots here and there throughout the country, and so remote from John, Elizabeth, and plain Mary Ann that they were denied its privileges and blessings.

The circuit chautauquas, employing the same means of culture, veritably began to "make the rounds" in their service to communities, just as a mail carrier, in a more intensive way, drops letters, papers, and magazines in the private mail box in front of every farmer's gate.

When the six- and seven-day circuits had become well established in the more populous centers, the five-day circuits sprang into prominence, having been designed to meet the needs of the people of smaller towns, and even of villages. Thus have the circuits succeeded in delivering important phases of chautauqua work to the remotest corners and out-of-the-way places.

The first quarter of the twentieth century was a most interesting and important era in human progress. During that period there was a veritable

migration of thought and music from the old centers of population and culture to the towns, villages, farms, and fields. The circuit chautauquas turned on the electric current where but recently the kerosene lamp had flickered. As Opie Read once remarked, "To the ruralite it introduced the statesman and the magician, the nightingale of song and the woodpecker of syncopation. He that induces his brother to think has given him more than bread; and he who brings the quiet laughter of true humor, lifts a mortgage from the heart. I have seen all that; I have heard great orators, real philosophers in places where the swamp frog hushed his croak to listen. Ah, and preëminent is the fact that the chautauqua is purely American."

No manager of the more substantial group has ever made the claim that the chautauqua is a real university. But it is well established that the chautauqua has served as a means for the dissemination of popular education, and its plan of operation has enabled it to deliver its message, over wide areas, to everybody in whom a thirst for knowledge could be aroused.

But in the early days it was looked upon with great suspicion by multitudes of people, and was openly charged by some to be but a new invention

in the game of graft. Wherever it went in the early days it was looked upon more or less as a mere show, and in some sections of the country was denounced as a vehicle of propaganda in support of wild notions and theories.

There were few circuit chautauquas then. True, there were local chautauquas, thinly distributed over the country, but so distant from the great bulk of the population that only the well-to-do, with time to burn, could afford to attend them.

For the average country town, beyond the steady grind of sturdy necessity, the season diversions comprised a few wandering playhouse shows in the winter time, a Fourth of July celebration, a third-rate circus that was a disappointment, and a street carnival that was a moral monstrosity.

The citizens had not yet conceived of any common public interests, and little realized the force of united action. The open town crowd dictated the policy of public entertainment, while the solid citizens sawed wood for private profit, trusting the Lord for general results.

The rank and file had never heard an orator of reputation except on political subjects, nor a musician of acknowledged standing. The leading characters in public and professional life were looked

## 272 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

upon as living in a world apart from the common people; and there existed no general taste for the products of genius. The average flight of human aspiration was limited, while, in every community, potential leaders by the score groped on in obscurity, with none to bear the torch that sets the heart aflame.

In this connection it is interesting to recount the visit of the spectacular Thomas Lawson, who stirred up so much excitement some years ago by his disclosures through *Everybody's Magazine* of certain phases of stock gambling. Ellison and Maus learned that Lawson was making a flying trip across the country in a special car with a party of thirteen people, and at once saw what they thought was a great opportunity. They went before Governor Mickey, of Nebraska, and induced him to telegraph Mr. Lawson requesting him to speak at the chautauqua at Fairbury, Nebraska. Mr. Lawson replied by prepaid telegram costing \$14.40. The gist of this wire was that he very much doubted whether Fairbury was a proper place in which to address the citizens of Nebraska. But he finally consented to come, and brought with him a dozen or more people in a special car.

As soon as the date on Lawson had been secured,



Mr. Ellison made application to the railroads for special train service, at reduced rates, for the Lawson meeting. But instead of furnishing this special service, it happened that every main line train due to arrive in Fairbury before the Lawson lecture that day ran from two to four hours late, so that the people endeavoring to come in from the outlying districts arrived too late to hear the great agitator of "Frenzied Finance." Governor Mickey had been secured to introduce Mr. Lawson, but the railroad managers induced him to attend a railroad meeting in Omaha on the day of Lawson's speech, stoutly maintaining that there was no public interest in Lawson's coming. But Mr. Ellison relates that his mother stood in the aisle of a coach over a sixty-mile journey on a branch line train jammed full of people trying to get to Fairbury to hear Lawson. The tent that day was overflowing with people — many of whom had driven overland thirty to forty miles.

The newspapers in Fairbury charged the railroads with discrimination against Lawson, and their attack was answered by the *State Journal* of Lincoln defending the railroads in a half-column article. Mr. Ellison further states that when he asked the

## 274 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

*State Journal* to publish a reply he had prepared they said there was no further interest in the Lawson matter.

We recite these incidents merely to show the contrast between the practices of that twenty-year-ago period and this, and the difficulties the chautauquas had to overcome in establishing themselves throughout the country.

The circuit chautauquas have succeeded in arousing throughout the length and breadth of the land a zeal for service to the community. Tens of thousands of citizens, who one time had small concern for their communities apart from their private interests, have been awakened to the privilege of joining hands with their fellows in efforts for the general good. The enthusiasm for this coöperative movement has spread gradually from individual to individual until finally all but the hopelessly "hard-boiled" have come to see the value of well conducted chautauqua assemblies.

The chautauqua circuits have been a big factor in democratizing music. In thousands of communities the second-story hall afforded the only meeting place for entertainment. To this would come traveling troupes, often of the flimsiest and cheapest grades, without reputation or recommendation. Poverty

stricken as they were in any real expression of true art, they afforded vast populations in small communities the only means of entertainment.

But with the circuit chautauquas came musicians of accomplishment and standing, and musical appreciation was no longer confined to a few aristocrats, with means and time for special study, but was extended in liberal measure to all who gathered under the canvas tops.

The past fifteen years have witnessed a complete revolution in musical taste and appreciation, largely due to the widespread and oft repeated musical contribution of the circuit chautauquas.

Next to music, whose appeal might be said to be universal, the most elemental art is the drama. This means of expression was born of the church and was kept entirely within the control of the church up to the time of the Puritan revolution. At that time the theatre became commercialized, and was handed down to us in a somewhat demoralized condition, discredited by religious thinkers and workers. It has long been felt, however, that the drama should be reinstated in its pristine purity, and given back to the whole people for their enjoyment.

The circuit chautauqua might be styled a "Little Theatre Movement" to restore the old time drama

## 276 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

in a refined form. During recent years the managers of the better grade circuits have been featuring on their programs morality plays, high grade comedies, and even Shakespearean productions, and some refined forms of musical comedy to the great delight of all.

The managers of the worth-while circuits are devoting a great deal of time in perfecting and working up still higher ideals in the further development of circuit chautauqua programs, and a degree of coöperation between managers is being developed that promises much for the future.

The great Lecture Conference held at Washington, District of Columbia, in the fall of 1922, was a significant accomplishment of circuit chautauqua managers. There they came together in brotherly council and listened together to men of world wide fame. Together they caught glimpses of the possibilities for further advancement, and together took stock of their own resources and the use that could be made of them.

The conventions of the International Lyceum and Chautauqua Association are coming to be more and more centers of intensive problem study, calculated to help relieve the burden that has long lain heavily upon managers who sought to go the way alone.

Contrary to the early predictions that circuit chautauquas would be short-lived, fewer mortal mistakes have been made in their management than in that of the Independent units. It is significant that on the larger circuits, under the direction of the ablest managers, the average town remains active longer than the average Independent town.

The increasing demands and exactions on the part of the communities visited have naturally served as spurs to the managers for the building of the best possible programs. Wherever these have kept ahead of the times and carried the torch above the crowd, the general interest has been sustained, and may be so sustained indefinitely.

The cause of prohibition owes much to the chautauquas. Its friends quietly rejoice in this fact, and its enemies openly charge it with blame.

Progressivism, not only in politics, but in many lines of thought, has felt the impact of strong minds battling against fossilized notions from the platform. William Allen White once remarked that "The Progressive Party was born from a dozen chautauqua speeches in Iowa and Kansas." This may have been a somewhat fanciful utterance, but it cannot be denied that the circuit audiences have

furnished wonderful opportunities for moulding public sentiment.

There is no disputing the fact that great changes have been brought about within the lifetime of the circuit chautauquas.

The railroad kings have been dethroned as political bosses, and United States senators are elected by direct vote of the people. The pot house politician has seen his former master, the keeper of the corner saloon, consigned, by an enlightened public conscience, to a state of everlasting limbo.

The giant business octopus, which once sat securely in the lap of political corruption, enjoying special privileges, and showing his ugly teeth to all competitors, now eats out of your hand from his cage in the public zoo, maintained there as a horrible specimen of commercial degeneracy. The dread of kings is a rapidly passing nightmare, and democracy, in faith and in fact, is coming into her own.

The Cheap John traveling troupe has walked the railroad ties back home and disbanded for good and all. The street carnival is wheezing to its doom; its chief attractions surviving mainly by virtue of liberal appropriations, by managers of county fairs, who still persist in underestimating human taste.

The average citizen has both seen and heard the

world's celebrities. The gulf that once divided them has all but evaporated. The old time halo has disappeared in the fuller light of a better understanding. The geniuses in the realms of music and the play, find welcoming ears and hearts everywhere, and full appreciation for the best they have to offer.

And, best of all, where the meagre advantages of the olden times produced one leader, the ampler advantages of today produce many. And the average level of human intelligence, aspiration and accomplishment has been appreciably lifted.

All those who are interested in human progress will be interested to speculate on what may have been the influence of twenty years of circuit chautauqua operation in the territory of the Middle West. With this in view, let us briefly glance at some major features appearing on the Vawter pioneer circuit. Take the distinguished men in the realm of national politics. Senator Robert M. LaFollette, with all his fiery zeal and opposition to organized reactionary forces, has delivered his message there. His contemporary, Senator Irvin L. Lenroot, covered the same territory with his able appeal. Victor Murdock, Thomas P. Gore, Governor A. C. Shallenberger of Nebraska, Governor

## 280 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Charles H. Brough of Arkansas, Henry T. Rainey of Illinois, Honorable Duncan McKinlay of California, Senators A. B. Cummins and William S. Kenyon of Iowa, and others of prominence have delivered to delighted circuit audiences the fervant expressions of their inmost convictions on great questions of public concern.

On matters of reform, Honorable James W. Folk of Missouri, turned the search light upon the grafters. Judge A. Z. Blair revealed the trickery of political corruption. Senator Frank J. Cannon, of Utah, told the true story of corrupt Mormon practices. Judge Marcus Kavanagh thundered his appeal for reforming judicial procedure. Maud Ballington Booth came with her sweet message of uplift and relief. Senator James K. Vardaman recounted his conflicts with reactionary forces. Chaplain E. H. Lougher voiced the need of reforms in prison management. Judge Ben B. Lindsay touched the hearts of thousands with his plea for delinquent boys and girls, and Frank Dixon hurled his shining lance in the face of many varieties of chicanery and fraud. To assert that these masterful efforts should fall upon deaf ears, unheeded, would be to charge the whole population with mental apostasy and complete degeneracy.



Along educational and inspirational lines let us mention Dr. Thomas E. Green with his wonderful oratory; Dr. Frank W. Gunsaulus, the master mind and master word-painter; Colonel George W. Bain, the silver-tongued orator of Kentucky; Dr. Monroe E. Markely; Dr. George R. Stuart; Judge George D. Alden, with his "Needs of the Hour;" Dr. A. A. Willetts, with his flood of sunshine; Bishop Robert McIntire; Bishop Anderson; Dr. James L. Gordon; J. Campbell White; Father Patrick J. McCorry, and his wonderful illustrated story of the Christ; Lee Francis Lybarger, with his analytical studies; H. A. Adrian revealing the mysteries of plant culture. Where is the line that shall be esteemed worthy to measure the height and the depth, the length and the breadth, to which the influences of these masterful addresses penetrate, or to set the bounds of inspiration and desire that they have induced?

George L. McNutt has been there, recounting his wonderful experiences with the heart of labor. Edwin R. Perry came along with his dramatic study of economic social problems, and Ernest Harold Baynes, in his delightful fashion, drew attention away from the horse, the cow, the cat, and the dog, to our thousand wild neighbors of fields and woods.

Montraville Wood delighted thousands with his

demonstrations in physical science. Sarah Tyson Rorer delivered her masterful treatise on the art of cooking. Doctor B. R. Baumgardt led the multitudes away into the limitless vastness of space, to study, at close range, the majestic beauty of the heavenly bodies.

Who shall say, and how shall time determine the ultimate value of these pronouncements and revelations to the inquiring hearts and minds of the multitudes?

Tired of thinking, weary of research, the people next sat under the spell of the Ben Greet Players, presenting comedies by the immortal Shakespeare. A little later they were thrilled by the enactment upon the circuit chautauqua stage of some of the best of the modern plays and comedies. "Broadway Jones," "The Melting Pot," "Turn to the Right," "It Pays to Advertise," with their stirring scenes, bright dialogue and clever plots, served as but another means of directing human thought and interest to the worth while things of life.

Arthur K. Peck came along with his wonderful story of the sea, gorgeously illustrated; W. Robert Goss with his story of Oberammergau; Evelyn Bargelt with her bewitching stories and marvelous crayon creations; Alton Packard, the inimitable cartoonist,

with caricature, song and story, appeared as a combination of minstrel, artist and philosopher to the delight of thousands. Then there was that queen of the entertainment platform, Katharine Ridgeway, whose life interpretations had the charm of magic, and whose versatile genius and winning personality have endeared her to multiplied thousands throughout the length and breadth of the land. Adrian M. Newens, the master monologist, electrified all with his "Message From Mars," and Opie Read, beloved by millions for his American stories, captured thousands more with his quaint philosophy and unique stories, and carried them with him on exquisite pilgrimages into the delightful realm of mental adventure.

Honorable Nels Darling blazed his way into the center of things and aroused whole neighborhoods to the necessity for closer coöperation. Governor E. W. Hoch, J. Adam Bede, Mrs. LaSalle Corbett Pickett, Governor R. B. Glenn, Senator James E. Watson, Phil P. Campbell, and Hon. Duncan McKinlay, each in turn, revived the multitudes to keener interest in public affairs and retold the glories of American tradition, American history, and American ideals.

Doctor Peter MacQueen revealed the heart of Africa, Lincoln Wirt the story of the frozen north. The Raweis brought the sunshine and peace of New Zealand. Ng Poon Chew brought over the first accurate information of the Celestial Empire, and Charles F. Scott told the truth about Mexico. Warren G. Harding of Ohio, recounted the history of the early patriots, with special reference to Alexander Hamilton, and from the circuit platform started his journey to the White House.

Private Lovell, battle scarred and invalidated home, gave the first personal account of the World War. Doctor Charles S. Medbury set the whole mid-continent aflame with enthusiasm to struggle through to victory. Doctor Frank Cole recited the first complete personal story of the break down of militaristic Germany; and D. Thomas Curtin, world famed newspaper writer, portrayed the jealousies and fears, the heartache and the turmoil of the dread era of European reconstruction.

One would need to charge any people with the densest and most stubborn ignorance and bigotry successfully to maintain that these deliverances, out of the heart of patriots, statesmen, travelers, scientists, and students of affairs, had failed to effect vast

revolutions in thought, and establish inspirations, and set objectives, that without them would have been impossible.

In strong contrast to the more labored and substantial elements of these programs there came Ralph Bingham with his barrel of fun, Walter Eccles and his comedy girls, the Riner Sisters with their unmatched charms. Then there was John B. Ratto in character portrayals unsurpassed; Lou J. Beauchamp, walking on the sunny side, in an hour and a half of fun and philosophy; Strickland W. Gillilan, master humorist, fun-maker, philosopher, writer, poet, and lover of mankind; Ralph Parlette, known of all and beloved by all, the bountiful optimist and purveyor of good humor.

The memories of laughs they induced amounted to no less than a vast mental sanitation, and bogymen, spooks, and hallucinations fled from their presence never to return.

Then there was the voice of Elsie Baker, the sweet singer; Burton Thatcher, the musical; Ruthven MacDonald, the genial and urbane, with a voice like the rolling of many waters; the great opera singers with Thaviu's Band portraying in rhythmic cadences the genius of Verdi in the immortal "Trovatore," and many more shining lights of vocal

## 286 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

musical expression, in songs of heart and home, love, romance, and love's young dream.

Then there were the organizations of instrumental music; great bands whose heroic blasts reverberated through the towns; the singers and players from the far off Philippines; yodlers from the Tyrolean Alps, the Balalaika Orchestra from Russia, and the bewitching steel guitar artists from Hawaii.

By gradual stages, from male quartettes and jubilee singers at the beginning, the demand for better came with increased musical appreciation, until today the highest classics find a ready ear and an appreciative heart on the farthest reaches of the chautauqua circuits and in the remotest precincts of civilization.

And what is here said of this circuit may be very largely repeated concerning other circuits throughout the country. Every successful manager has annually searched the world over for such features as are capable of the necessary contributions to the chautauqua program, and in the year 1923 the impact of this mighty host, carrying the latest messages and accomplishments of the world, will be felt in ten thousand communities within the United States of America.

But it is not enough to merely recount what the

chautauqua has brought to the people, for be it remembered that scattered through these audiences East, West, North, and South, have been anxious listeners out of whose hearts have sprung the reactions that are producing a new and stronger civilization.

Dr. Frank W. Gunsaulus once remarked that sixty-six per cent of all the students of the Armour Institute of Technology were recruited from the ranks of chautauqua patrons. Doctor Charles S. Medbury, pastor of one of the largest protestant churches in the world, says that his experience has been that in his efforts at holding young folks to christian work and the pursuit of education, he has found it comparatively easy where they come from chautauqua communities and much more difficult where they have not.

Thus the poets, historians, scientists, and statesmen of today were the listeners and the learners of a decade ago. And as Moses, in the land of Midian, was attracted to a great work by the spectacle of a burning bush by the wayside, so have multitudes of young men and women been called out of the humblest homes and surroundings to participate in the larger affairs of general human concern. And it is not a mere presumption that the flapping tent of the

## 288 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

circuit chautauqua first caught their attention, and induced the interest that led to the larger adventures of an expanding life.

As a sample of the contribution of the circuit chautauquas to the cause of popular education, I wish here to insert an incident that occurred some five or six years ago.

The writer was acting as superintendent and platform manager of a circuit chautauqua in a western state, and accepting the invitation of a new-found friend, had gone in the cool of the morning for a ramble in the woods. Towards nine o'clock I became somewhat weary and began searching for a spring or brooklet in order to procure a drink of water.

After considerable casting about I was attracted to a dwelling in the woods by the crowing of a cock, and approaching found it to be but the humblest kind of a log cabin. The front lawn was shaded by overhanging trees, was orderly in all its appointments, and everything about the place bore evidences of having been loved and cared for. An elderly lady reposed in an arm chair in the inviting shade busying herself by knitting.

In response to my request for water, she directed me to an open well over which towered an old-fash-



ioned sweep, and in a moment I had hoisted the old oaken bucket from the cool depths and quenched my burning thirst from the coolness of its brim.

I then seated myself on the grass near the elderly lady and engaged her in conversation. My thought was to discover, if possible, what people were accustomed to think about who lived in such primitive fashion tucked away in a recess of the dark wood. I put the question to her as to whether she had ever attended the chautauqua.

Imagine my surprise when she informed me, in the sweetest possible way, that she had hardly missed a session during the six years that the chautauqua had been conducted at their county seat town four miles away. For an hour or more she continued to inform me of the celebrated men and women whom she had heard, and with whom she felt almost personally acquainted. She said that the field naturalist, Baynes, had aroused in her an interest in wild creatures that had caused her to study the habits of the squirrels, chip-monks, and numerous birds of the surrounding woods and had opened an entirely new field of interest for her. She discussed with distinct clearness Judge Lindsey's theory of handling juvenile delinquents, and quite agreed with him in all his theories. She had enjoyed a

speech by Richmond Pearson Hobson, but said she could not become alarmed over his theory of a Japanese invasion of this country and felt quite secure in her little home. It was clear, from the abundance of her information and the zeal she manifested in the discussion of live topics, that the chautauqua, through a period of six years, had not only made indelible impressions on her mind, but had led her out from "a little house by the side of the road" to a tolerably well defined consciousness of world citizenship. And this incident, we believe, could be duplicated in its main parts a thousand fold throughout the country.

Charles F. Horner relates an incident that occurred at Chelsea, Oklahoma, one of his circuit chautauqua towns. Visiting that assembly a year or two ago he was approached by a Cherokee Indian woman at the close of the program. She said she had been informed that he was the general manager, and that if he were going to be present at the night session she wanted to bring him something that she thought he would prize. He informed her that he would be present, and then awaited with much interest further developments.

That evening this Cherokee woman brought and presented to him a complete set of his circuit chau-

tauqua program booklets covering a period of ten consecutive years. These she had accumulated during the years and preserved with great care. She told Mr. Horner, with a good deal of pride, that she had missed only one session in the whole period of ten years.

Incidents of a character similar to these are sufficiently numerous to make up a volume by themselves, and are cited here simply to furnish a hint of the far reaching educational contribution of the chautauquas.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WHENCE AND HOW OF THE CIRCUIT WHO'S WHO

The development of the circuit chautauquas during the past twenty years has furnished many outlets for human talents that might otherwise have remained pent up, obscured and unknown. This is not only true of the people who have appeared upon the platforms as lecturers, musicians, and entertainers, but to a host of others who have employed their talents along the line of organization, promotion, and management.

The writer has made serious effort to get complete information with regard to the work of all those prominently connected in any way with the business offices of the various chautauqua circuits. While the response has been liberal, it has by no means been complete, and many have either neglected to reply to letters of inquiry or purposely chosen to keep off the printed page.

What we shall offer in this chapter therefore, will not constitute a complete Who's Who of the circuit chautauqua leaders, and there being so many deserv-

ing of mention that we cannot attempt anything in the nature of a full statement without extending the chapter far beyond any reasonable limits.

Keith Vawter began the promotion of his first chautauqua circuit in 1903 under the name of the Standard Chautauqua Bureau of Chicago, and put this circuit into operation in Iowa and Nebraska in 1904. In 1906 he dropped the name Standard and organized the Redpath Chautauquas, and later the Redpath-Vawter Chautauqua System, made up, during the hey-day of promotion, of one major circuit of seven-day chautauquas, three five-day circuits, and two Evening Star circuits having programs in the evening only. Mr. Vawter has been universally recognized as a leader in chautauqua development, having been personally responsible for many important improvements in equipment, advertising methods, and particularly the artistic displays so generally characteristic of circuit chautauqua advertising.

George H. Turner began his chautauqua career as superintendent of Old Salem Assembly, near Petersburg, Illinois. Under his management this institution grew to enormous proportions and enjoyed liberal patronage from the surrounding territory over a wide area. This connection began in 1901

## 294 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

and continued through several years. Later, Mr. Turner became associated with Paul M. Pearson in the management of the Swarthmore Chautauqua Association with headquarters at Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

Fred W. Bartell, while living at Siloam Springs, Arkansas, became enthused over a lecture by Colonel George W. Bain at an Arkansas chautauqua, and organized an independent assembly for Siloam Springs in 1904. The next few years he devoted to the organization and operation of a limited circuit in Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Kansas, known as the Associated Chautauquas, and is entitled to be ranked as one of the real pioneers in circuit chautauqua management. A bank failure seriously interfered with his financial arrangements and he was compelled to discontinue the Bartell circuit after a few years of successful operation.

Ray Newton began in 1916 as an office assistant of the Slayton Bureau of Boston, and by successful stages advanced to the position of manager of the Travers-Newton circuit of chautauquas.

Nelson Trimble was an advance man for White & Myers, beginning in 1915. He assisted in organizing the Ellison-White Chautauquas in Australia and New Zealand, and afterwards became a co-part-

ner with Robert L. Myers in Interstate Platform Service.

Harry P. Harrison got his first chautauqua experience in 1904, as an employee of Keith Vawter, manager of the Standard Chautauqua Bureau. In 1907 he procured a one-fourth interest in the Redpath Bureau and became the manager of Chicago territory. In 1912 he launched a major chautauqua circuit and a few years later organized a number of five-day circuits. He has been a consistent advocate of high-grade music as a necessary part of a successful chautauqua program. He advanced from chautauqua superintendent to general manager.

E. M. Avery was an agent for the Britt Lyceum Bureau in 1911 and was so successful in the prosecution of his work that, when the business passed to the Standard Chautauquas, Mr. Avery was made president and manager.

C. E. Booth started out as a platform superintendent for White & Myers in 1912, and showing great aptitude for management, was placed in an official position with the Mutual Chautauqua Bureau of Chicago.

G. LeRoy Collins of Rochester, New York, was a booking agent for the Redpath Bureau in 1913 and advanced, by regular stages of promotion, to

become general manager of the Rochester branch of the Redpath Bureau.

Harry Z. Freeman began in 1912 as a booking agent. In 1915 he became associated with Central Community Chautauqua System and made himself so valuable to that organization that he finally became general manager.

W. Vernon Harrison of Columbus, Ohio, began his career as a booking agent. In 1912 he organized and operated the first Redpath circuit of chautauquas in Ohio, and has continued as general manager of the Redpath chautauquas operating out of Columbus.

Ford Howell got into the chautauqua field in 1905 with the first Midland circuit, and continued for many years as a successful chautauqua manager. He ranks as one of the real pioneers in this important development of modern cultural activity. He has disposed of his interests in the Midland Chautauquas and is now manager of the Los Angeles branch of Midland Lyceum Bureau.

J. A. Bumstead began in 1912 with the Redpath-Horner circuit as a field representative. In 1913 he was induced to go to the Columbus Redpath office and has since been promoted to the position of assistant manager.



J. Roy Ellison began as a lyceum booking agent. He was associated as a partner with Keith Vawter in launching the first chautauqua circuit in 1904. After some years he again served with Mr. Vawter as platform superintendent and afterwards made the first real invasion into the Far West with a circuit of chautauquas under the name of Ellison-White System. This venture proved to be a success in spite of many prophesies to the contrary, and the Ellison-White System was afterwards extended to Australia, New Zealand, and Alaska, and bears the distinction of being the most wide-spread and diversified of all circuit chautauqua activities.

Frank A. Morgan began as agent for independent talent as early as 1907, and delayed starting the organization of any circuit chautauqua business until 1916. But when he did start he succeeded in the organization of three circuits, successfully serving the chautauqua interests of a wide territory from Chicago.

J. M. Erickson was two years superintendent of chautauquas for Ellison-White, and in 1916 invaded Canada and Alaska, organizing and establishing what afterwards bore the name of Dominion Chautauquas, of which he was made general manager.

O. B. Stephenson was an agent of the Mutual

## 298 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

Lyceum Bureau in 1903. Later he cast his lot with the Coit-Alber Bureau as a chautauqua representative and afterward became director of Affiliated Bureaus which he fills with credit.

S. R. Bridges of Atlanta, Georgia, began his career as a lyceum agent in 1898 for the Alkahest Bureau of Atlanta. In 1908 he organized the Alkahest circuit of chautauquas which he operated for a period of six years and then sold out to the Lincoln Chautauquas. He is president and general manager of the Alkahest Lyceum Bureau.

Alonzo E. Wilson was the moving factor in the organization of the Lincoln Temperance Chautauqua in 1905 when one hundred and five towns were served the first year. The next year the name was changed to the Lincoln Chautauquas, and Alonzo E. Wilson continued to be president and general manager for fourteen consecutive years with distinguished success. He is now national field director of the Near East Relief, with headquarters at Chicago.

S. M. Holliday, after some preliminary lyceum and chautauqua experience, purchased the Midland circuit in 1909 and was president and general manager until 1922, when he disposed of his interest by sale. His early beginnings entitle him to be

classed as one of the pioneers of the circuit chautauqua movement.

Charles F. Horner, while residing in Lexington, Nebraska, became interested in the lyceum and the proposition for a local chautauqua. At the invitation of J. Roy Ellison, he and other citizens of his town arranged for the delivery of the circuit program of the Standard Chautauqua Bureau at Lexington in the summer of 1904. From this time on his interest in this class of work rapidly increased and he soon determined to give his whole time to it. He removed to Lincoln and furnished the leadership for the organization of the seven day chautauqua circuit beginning in 1907, and within the next two years developed two five day circuits, and afterwards extended the field of his operation south to the gulf and west to the coast. He is one of the circuit pioneers and has been a powerful force in the organization and development of this class of chautauquas.

George H. Lemon started out as tent man in connection with the Standard Chautauqua System in 1916, and by successive stages of promotion became circuit manager.

Walter E. Stern began with Ellison-White in 1914. He served in all capacities except as a mem-

ber of a tent crew, and is thoroughly identified with the management of the Ellison-White system.

George G. Whitehead was publicity manager of the Redpath Columbus office in 1914. Was made chairman of the publicity committee of the International Lyceum and Chautauqua Association, and is now publicity manager of the Redpath business operating from Columbus, Ohio.

J. R. Beach got his first experience as a cashier on the Redpath-Horner circuit in 1909. Later he served as advance advertising representative, then as superintendent. He afterwards became part owner of the business and finally assistant general manager and treasurer.

J. R. Cornell began his chautauqua career in 1913 as traveling auditor of the Redpath-Vawter System. In 1919 he took over the management of the Midland Lyceum Bureau of Des Moines.

Fred D. Ewell began in 1907 as advertising manager for the Lincoln Temperance Chautauquas. He was closely associated with L. J. Whiteside and Alonzo E. Wilson in 1912 when they took over the management of the Lincoln Chautauquas. Mr. Ewell is now manager of the Mutual-Ewell Bureau.

R. A. Swink was an advance advertising representative on the Coit-Alber circuit in 1917. He

afterwards served as superintendent and has been manager for the past three years.

O. V. Moon started early with S. M. Holliday in 1909 on the Midland circuit. He later bought an interest and became secretary of the Midland circuit, continuing in this position until the business was sold.

J. S. White is one of the pioneer circuit managers. He was associated with the beginnings of the Midland Chautauqua circuit in 1905, serving as vice-president. Soon afterward he launched a business of his own, and has for years been manager and owner of the White & Myers System operating out of Kansas City.

L. H. Maus began his chautauqua experience in 1902 as manager of an independent chautauqua at Sidney, Iowa, and did some work of promise along the same line in Western Iowa. In 1904 he became associated with Keith Vawter and J. Roy Ellison in the organization of the Standard Chautauquas, but retired from the business after the first season. He was afterward identified as superintendent on the Redpath-Vawter System, and is now connected with the LaSalle Extension University of Chicago.

H. H. Kennedy was an advance advertising representative on the Redpath Horner circuit in 1913,

and has risen through the various stages of advancement, and now occupies the position of vice-president with the Redpath-Horner System.

C. A. Pepper began his lyceum experience as a traveling representative for the Redpath Bureau in 1898 with offices in New York City. In 1913, in association with Keith Vawter, he established Redpath chautauquas in New York and New England, operating the first circuit to appear in that territory. In 1914 he established a producing department for the development of plays and players for use on the chautauqua circuits.

Lowell C. Paget began as tent man in 1917 on the Ellison-White circuit and spent four years with that management in various capacities. He is now connected with a Mortgage, Loan and Insurance office in Portland.

T. A. Burke began with the Ellison-White chautauquas in 1918 and afterwards became secretary of the Affiliated Bureaus, which position he has held since 1919.

George C. Aydelott began as a lecturer on the Redpath-Horner circuit in 1913, and continues in this capacity, together with extensive service as superintendent and circuit manager.

Louis J. Alber and Arthur C. Coit, long associated

in the lyceum field, joined teams and launched the Coit-Alber chautauqua circuit in 1914. This management continued to operate on a growing scale in the territory about Cleveland, and successfully invaded Canada. In 1922, they sold out to the Swarthmore management.

F. M. Allen began in 1910 as booking superintendent for the Midland circuit of Des Moines, and through many years held that important position with great credit.

L. J. Strain began as a ticket taker and gate keeper on the Lincoln Chautauquas in 1913. He served on a crew as superintendent, and finally as circuit manager, and was then given the responsible position of assistant general manager of the Standard Chautauqua System.

D. L. Cornetet began with the Redpath office in Columbus, Ohio, in 1916 as superintendent and advance agent, finally to become a circuit manager in that system.

E. W. Carson began as a crew boy on the Midland circuit in 1910 and worked up from crew boy to general manager. He has served the Midland circuit, the Jones System and the Redpath-Vawter System, and finally became general manager of the Cadmean chautauquas of Topeka, Kansas.

## 304 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

E. L. Mathews began in California as advance advertising representative on the Redpath-Horner circuit. Afterwards serving as superintendent and is now manager of one of the circuits of the Redpath-Horner System.

C. C. Collett began his chautauqua experience as an advance advertising man in 1908. He has been continuously with the Redpath-Vawter System since that time, serving with conspicuous success as manager of one of the circuits.

Paul M. Pearson first saw the chautauquas as a platformist in literary recitals. He began when quite young in the independent field and was a prime favorite, often remaining for a week giving a change of program daily. He served with distinction as editor of *Talent*, president of the International Lyceum and Chautauqua Association, and is founder and manager of the Swarthmore Chautauquas — an important group operating in Pennsylvania and contiguous territory.

T. F. Graham began with the Redpath-Vawter System in 1907 as an advance booking representative. He afterwards became president of the corporation and for a term of fourteen years was intimately associated with Mr. Vawter in the active



field service and the development of the Redpath-Vawter System. He now lives in California.

F. C. Travers began his chautauqua experience about the year 1905 as a platform lecturer, having for his subject "Napoleon Bonaparte." He first appeared on numerous independent chautauquas and was afterwards secured by C. Durant Jones for a tour of his circuit. Later he conceived the idea of a chautauqua circuit of his own and organized the Travers-Wick Chautauquas. After two or three years Mr. Wick was succeeded by Ray Newton, and the circuit has since been known as the Travers-Newton Chautauquas.

C. Durant Jones, head of the Jones Chautauqua System, was for years an active advocate of prohibition in Iowa, and was made candidate for governor on that ticket. He had watched the operation of the Lincoln Temperance Chautauquas in Illinois, and in 1910 launched a circuit in Iowa for the propagation of temperance ideas. After the first year he abandoned the special advocacy of temperance and proceeded in the delivery of chautauqua programs along usual lines. His specialty was developing chautauquas in small towns.

Charles M. Mayne got his first chautauqua expe-

rience while serving as Y. M. C. A. secretary at Lincoln, Nebraska, and during 1909 and 1910 delivered lectures on the Redpath-Horner circuit during his summer vacation. He then spent several years in Gary, Indiana, as secretary of the Y. M. C. A., and continued in this work until 1916 when he became assistant manager of the Redpath-Horner circuits with office at Kansas City. Here he remained four years, with the exception of a period during the war spent in France where he had the important duty of financing and managing entertainment projects in behalf of the Expeditionary Force. In 1920 he became identified with the official management of the Redpath-Vawter Chautauqua System at Cedar Rapids, Iowa, as assistant manager, which position he still holds.

James S. Loar was state president of the Epworth League Assemblies in Illinois when he first became interested in chautauqua management in connection with James H. Shaw at Bloomington, Illinois. From that time, for several years, he and Mr. Shaw were partners in the promotion of independent chautauquas. Mr. Loar then conceived the idea of a form of chautauqua management differing in some important respects from what he and Mr. Shaw had practiced, and launched what he calls the Independ-

ent Co-Operative Chautauquas, which has been chiefly a kind of wholesale service to communities already organized, and the resuscitation of some which had fallen by the wayside. In 1922 he took over the management of the Interstate circuit and organized what he calls the Interurban circuit operating in small towns in Illinois and Indiana.

John F. Chambers was a monologue artist on the Redpath Lyceum list for many years and conductor of a school of public speaking in Pittsburgh. About 1917 he was made department manager in the Redpath Chautauqua offices in Chicago.

W. S. Rupe, in company with G. S. Chance, organized the Acme Chautauqua System which began operations in 1919 with a circuit of sixty-seven towns. He helped extend this system until it included two hundred and seventy-eight towns operating in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Missouri, and Arkansas. In 1922, while acting as manager of the Des Moines Acme System he bought out the seven day circuit of the Midland Chautauquas which, together with his circuit already developed, constituted an important branch of chautauqua developments.

James H. Shaw began his chautauqua career as a lecturer at Pontiac, Illinois, a quarter of a century

## 308 FIFTY YEARS OF CHAUTAUQUA

ago, and while predisposed to devote his whole time and attention to platform speaking, was drawn into the business of promotion and organization by the discovery of many promising fields. Few seasons have passed in twenty years when he has not established, in some favorable center, an independent chautauqua, and practically all of his promotions have proven to be substantial and permanent. He has consistently held to the independent chautauqua idea from the beginning.

C. H. White began his chautauqua career when he joined with J. Roy Ellison in the Ellison-White circuit of chautauquas covering the entire western section of the United States, and afterwards invading foreign territory. His name is inseparably connected with this species of new and untried promotion, which gives many evidences of permanency.

Hugh S. Bell began his chautauqua career as superintendent and platform manager on the Redpath-Vawter circuits, and, finding the business to his liking, took an important position in the office of the Redpath-Vawter Systems at Cedar Rapids, where as assistant manager he has charge of the operation of two five-day circuits and one Evening Star circuit.

M. E. Paget served with the Ellison-White Sys-

tem as advance man and booking representative, and afterwards became manager of one of their important circuits.

Guy Dietrick, like many other young men getting their first chautauqua experience in positions of minor importance, rose steadily by dint of close application to business and a natural love of the work to a position of responsibility and authority in the office of the Community Chautauquas of New Haven, Connecticut.

Walter Ricks is another example of young men beginning their career in subordinate positions on a chautauqua circuit during the active summer season who afterwards arose to the position of circuit manager in the Ellison-White System of chautauquas.

Wm. A. Colledge began as a popular lecturer at independent chautauquas, as he could find time away from his duties as an educator. The circuits early called him to their platforms where he long served with distinction. Some years ago he was made Director of the Educational Department of the Redpath of Chicago, in which field he has made and is making a valuable contribution to the lifting of chautauqua and lyceum activities to higher levels of efficiency and power.

## APPENDIX

Below appears a list of independent chautauquas which includes, as far as information available permits, all those organized up to the year 1904, when the circuit chautauquas appeared. Where known, the year is given in which these several assemblies were launched.

ALABAMA		Gainesville	1904
Anniston		Melbourne	
Talladega	1893	Mt. Dora	
ARKANSAS		St. Petersburg	
		GEORGIA	
		Albany	
		Barnesville	1904
Eureka Springs		Dublin	1902
Fort Smith		Gainesville	
Siloam Springs	1886	Hawkinsville	
Springdale	1898	Marietta	
CALIFORNIA		Newnan	1904
		ILLINOIS	
Long Beach		Aurora	
Monterey	1879	Bloomington	1906
Pacific Grove	1880	Brooklyn	
COLORADO		Canton	
		Clinton	1900
Boulder	1898		
Colorado Springs	1902		
Palmer Lake			
FLORIDA			
DeFuniak Springs	1884		

## APPENDIX

311

Danville	1888	Madison	
Decatur	1904	New Albany	1904
Delavan		Remington	1895
Dixon	1888	Richmond	
Joliet	1904	Rome City	1879
Kankakee		Vincennes	1904
Lake Bluff	1877	Winona	1894
Lincoln	1902	IOWA	
Lithia Springs	1891	Albia	
Mattoon		Allerton	1899
Moline	1901	Ames	1904
Monmouth	1904	Atlantic	
Mechanicsburg		Centerville	1904
Oak Park	1904	Clarinda	1896
Ottawa	1883	Clear Lake	1876
Paris	1904	Colfax	1895
Petersburg	1898	Columbus Junction	
Piasa	1884	Creston	1904
Pontiac	1902	Fairfield	1902
Princeton		Fort Dodge	1903
Rockford	1901	Malvern	1904
Shelbyville	1900	Mediapolis	1904
Sterling	1902	Peterson	1897
Sycamore	1902	Sidney	
Urbana		Storm Lake	1904
		Tama-Toledo	1903
		Washington	1903
		Waterloo	
		KANSAS	
		Cawker City	1898
		Clay Center	1904

Emporia	1901	Clinton	
Ottawa	1883	Grant City	1903
Wathena	1899	Maysville	
White Cloud		Rockport	1900
Winfield	1887	Sedalia	
KENTUCKY		NEBRASKA	
Ashland	1901	Beatrice	1888
Carlisle	1904	David City	
Lexington	1887	Genoa	1904
Owensboro		Lincoln	1897
LOUISIANA		Salem	
Monroe		NEW JERSEY	
Ruston		Atlantic City	
MARYLAND		Ocean Grove	1879
Emory Grove		NEW YORK	
Mountain Lake Park	1883	Chautauqua	1874
Washington Grove		Cuba	
MASSACHUSETTS		Round Lake	1878
Northampton	1887	Syracuse	
South Framingham	1880	NORTH DAKOTA	
MICHIGAN		Devils Lake	1883
Bay View	1876	OHIO	
Lake Orion		Bethesda	
Ludington	1894	Defiance	
South Haven		Delaware	1904
MISSISSIPPI		Franklin	1895
Biloxi		Lakeside	1875
Crystal Springs		Lancaster	
MISSOURI		Mt. Vernon	1903
Carthage	1897	Millersport	



## APPENDIX

313

Sandusky	1877	TENNESSEE	
Smithville		Montagle	1883
Urbana		TEXAS	
OKLAHOMA		Waxahachie	1890
Shawnee		VIRGINIA	
OREGON		Hillsboro	1877
Ashland	1893	Purcellville	1878
PENNSYLVANIA		WEST VIRGINIA	
Eagles Mere		Moundsville	
Mt. Gretna	1892	WISCONSIN	
SOUTH DAKOTA		Chetek	
Aberdeen	1903	Delavan	1898
Big Stone	1899	Marinette	1898
Canton		Monona Lake	1880
Huron		Racine	1903
Madison		Waupaca	





































UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY



138 972

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY